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# The Messages of The Bible

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# The Messages of the Bible

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Professor CHARLES F. KENT, Ph.D., of Yale University.

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VOLUME V

## THE MESSAGES OF THE PSALMISTS

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The Messages of the Bible

# THE MESSAGES OF THE PSALMISTS

THE PSALMS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
ARRANGED IN THEIR NATURAL GROUPING
AND FREELY RENDERED IN PARAPHRASE

BY

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# PREFACE

So many books have already been written upon the Psalter that it may well seem superfluous to add another to their number. Yet the treasures of the Psalter are inexhaustible. There can never come a time when the last word upon it has been said. It is an indispensable expression of the spiritual life; and it will stand as an inspiration and a challenge to the interpreter of every age.

Nor can it be said that the Psalter is too well known. Often as it is sung with the heart, it cannot be said that it is always sung "with the understanding also." The reasons for this are many. Much of it is confessedly hard to understand, even with the best aids of exegesis and archæology. The text is sometimes obscure, even to desperation, and the English version not seldom leaves upon the mind an impression of complete confusion (cf. Ps. 17 : 14). Occasionally it is impossible to say whether the allusions are to ancient or recent history; and again, many of the most powerful psalms are so colored by ancient modes of thought and expression that, even where they are not unintelligible, they make but a slender impression—out of all proportion to their real originality

and power—upon the modern reader who has not the key. This class would be illustrated by Psalm 82, with its quaint but powerful presentation of the truth *noblesse oblige*, or by Psalm 87 with its magnanimous missionary outlook.

It is here that one may venture to hope that a volume written from the standpoint of the *Messages of the Bible* series, may have some contribution to offer to the elucidation of the Psalter; for one of the aims of the series is to present the ancient words of the Bible in the language of to-day. The problems of the Psalter are very numerous—textual, contextual, chronological, theological; a very brief sketch of the more important of these will be found in the Introduction. But I have made it my aim to reduce to the minimum all such discussions affecting the criticism of the Psalter and the nature of Hebrew poetry; and I have sought, without lingering unduly upon the threshold, to conduct the reader into the beautiful house of the Hebrew Psalter itself—there to wander about its rooms, and to look upon its glories, to breathe its gracious atmosphere, and to learn to talk with the "Lord of the place." Biblical criticism has been compared—in the words of the seventy-fourth psalm—to the hammering of impious hands upon the beautiful woodwork of the temple. The comparison is far from just to the great masters of interpretation; but, at any rate, the minuter work of criticism should be left till the religious grandeur of the Psalter has been appreciated.

Fortunately the psalms can be enjoyed without a comprehensive knowledge of the problems which they involve.

A word must be offered in explanation of the groups into which I have attempted to arrange the Psalter. It may be said at once that, in the nature of the case, no such division can ever be completely satisfactory. In our ignorance of the origin of individual psalms, the chronological classification is, speaking generally, out of the question—only in one case have I made tentative use of it (see the Psalms of Thanksgiving)—and any other classification is sure to involve cross-division. Thanksgiving and petition, reflection and imprecation, are subtly interwoven into the texture of many a psalm; and there are few psalms which could not, with more or less propriety, find their place within several groups. The Psalms are not logical treatises: they are the expression of the emotion of unusually sensitive spirits, and the emotions are sometimes subtly transformed, like the clouds that change their color as they hang in the light of the setting sun. It is not claimed that the groups here offered are mutually exclusive, but they are sufficiently distinct to suggest the wide variety of theme with which the hearts of the singers were occupied. The Psalms of Reflection, in particular, open up a wide and profitable field of inquiry. It seemed fitting that the first group should be reserved for Psalms of Adoration, while the last should deal with the Universal Reign of Jehovah.

It was a great satisfaction to me to discover that Professor Kent and I, who were working quite independently, reached conclusions that were practically identical with regard to the general classification of the Psalter. This coincidence in a matter so complicated and so capable of various interpretation, may be fairly taken to prove that the classification adopted is, at any rate, not unreasonable.

Within the groups (or subdivisions of groups) themselves, my plan has been to bring together psalms which dealt with similar aspects of a problem (cf. Pss. 37, 49, 73), and to effect some kind of logical sequence—so far as such a phrase in such a connection is applicable—between the various psalms composing a group, as, for example, in the Psalms in Celebration of Worship, or the Royal Psalms. Where the psalms were so similar in temper that such a grouping seemed unnatural or impossible, as for example, in the Psalms of Petition, I have been content, in the main, to arrange them in the order in which they occur in the Psalter. Where, for any reason, this order is interrupted, an explanation is given in a foot-note. The numbering of the verses is that of the English Bible.

Few literary tasks are so hard as paraphrase; and perhaps no paraphrase is so hard as that of the Psalter. It is not only that the language is, on the whole, so simple; but it expresses so perfectly the various moods of the spiritual life that it has universally determined the language of praise and prayer, and is the common speech of

Christendom to-day. Other words are almost sure to be worse words; and the powerful effect of the parallelism is all but inimitable. The difficulty reaches its climax in the attempt to paraphrase the metaphors in which the Psalter abounds. Often they seem so simple and appealing as to need no paraphrase; yet they usually conceal a mine of meaning. But the moment an attempt is made to express what they suggest, the directness of the original metaphor is lost. The twenty-third psalm, for example, practically defies paraphrase. The attempt to assign a definite meaning to the "green pastures" and the "dark valley" would be both prosaic and futile. The psalm is, in the main, grandly luminous; but its glory lies largely in its power to suggest to each reader an application which suits his individual experience; and this power is destroyed, when, by the definite language of prose, the paraphrase individualizes the application. It seemed best on the whole, in such a case, to retain the original metaphor and to add only such touches in the course of the paraphrase as would bring home the image with power and clearness to the reader's imagination.

It would be tedious to enumerate the books to which I owe suggestions, but I am under special obligations to the commentaries of Baethgen and Duhm. The latter commentary, in particular, will probably be epoch-making in the exegesis of the Psalter. In spite of its amusing superciliousness, it displays extraordinary insight both into the

text and substance of the Psalms, and is a perpetual stimulus to the student of the Psalter.

I have again to record my thanks to the editors for kindness shown in many ways, and very especially for their help in finding appropriate titles for the various psalms.

The Psalter will live as long as men are moved by the impulse to praise and to pray. It anticipates and expresses the profoundest emotions of the spirit. Its simple, penetrating words have a strange power over the human heart; and, in the more solitary moods of the soul, it can touch to thoughts too deep for tears. Every fresh study of it confirms me in the conviction that it will ever prove itself a veritable gift of God to all who "taste and see."

JOHN E. MCFADYEN.

KNOX COLLEGE, TORONTO,
*January* 9, 1904.

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# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

## I

### THE UNIQUE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE PSALTER

The Hebrew Psalter is the hymn-book of the holy catholic church throughout the world. It has been from the beginning, and in all probability it will be to the end. There are indeed some churches which do not lift their praises to God in the very words of the Psalter, and there are other churches which praise him in a multitude of other hymns besides those of the Psalter. But even where the Psalms are not directly used, their words and thoughts have been appropriated, so that many of the noblest modern hymns are but echoes of the songs of the ancient Jewish church, and written under the immediate inspiration of the Psalter. It will be enough to recall Luther's great hymn

"A safe stronghold our God is still,"

which is nothing but the German version of the forty-sixth psalm.

Nothing could have given the Psalter this phenomenal

hold upon the heart of the centuries but its absolute fidelity to the deepest and most manifold experiences of the human soul. It was "out of the depths" that the psalmists cried to God, and the deep of our experience answers to the deep of theirs. In their words we find our own emotions expressed and see our own experience reflected. They knew what was in man; and that is why they "find" us. They knew the strangeness and the sorrow of life, but amidst it all they also knew God to be their shelter and their strength. Never have there been men who faced more honestly the problems of life, or felt its pathos more keenly. Life was a mystery, and they knew that by searching they could never fully find its meaning out; but they searched like the brave men they were, till sometimes their hearts grew bitter and throbbed with pain (73 : 21). They voice that "sense of tears in mortal things," which is felt by all who look with fearless and unconventional eyes at the pain and surprises of life. They exhaust the range of metaphor in trying to express their sense of its frailty. It is like the grass or the meadow-flower, like a passing shadow, like a fleeing bird, like yesterday when it is passed, like a dark night, like a breath that passes and never comes back (90 : 4-6, 10; 103 : 15, 16; 78 : 39). The psalmists are beset behind and before by enemies. Throughout the whole length of the Psalter you can hear their stealthy tread and listen to their venomous words, and watch them digging their pits

for the men who are better than they. And ever and anon there falls upon the ear the sob of a breaking heart that longs to fly away, and be at rest, and lodge in the wilderness, far from the stormy wind and tempest (55 : 6-8). In such a world, or at least with such a mood upon them, the psalmists feel their homelessness; they are but strangers and sojourners in the land (39 : 12). They suffer and they toil, rising early, and sitting down late to the evening meal, and eating the bread of sorrows (127 : 2). They have no hope nor comfort but in God. Small wonder that the words of men who looked into life with such stern sorrow in their eyes should have found all through the centuries an echo in the hearts of other men, bowed by the weight of grief or persecution.

The refuge of those men was in God; and more persistently than any other book in the Bible does the Psalter bring home to us the overwhelming sense of the reality and personality of God. The sight of his gracious face was better to them than abundance of corn and wine (4 : 6, 7), and his presence by the side of the spirit that was perplexed soothed it into peace again (73). The "strangers and pilgrims" are yet in some strange sense the guests of God (23 : 5, 6 ; 36 : 8), daily gathering around his hospitable table in a world that is full of his goodness. From every storm there is a refuge in the shadow of his wings (57 : 1), and there the weary soul can lie in peace and look up with a smile, like a weaned

child on the bosom of his mother (131 : 2). The psalms were written and sung by men who counted God their friend.

God is the great reality of the Psalter—almost more real than the grief and persecution which drove the psalmists to him. They sometimes forget their pain and bewilderment when they see it against that "mercy of God," which is "all the day" (52 : 1).[1] Just here the Book of Psalms has a notable contribution to offer to practical religion. So long as sin and sorrow continue to form part of human experience, religion will continue to be largely introspective, and there will always be the danger of forgetting the inspiration of the mountains and the sea and the "splendid breadth of the open sky." There is a magnificent objectivity about the Psalter which comes as a much needed tonic to a too analytic type of religion. Not without meaning are Psalms 103 and 104 placed together. The simple juxtaposition reminds us that the God who grants forgiveness and healing is also the God whose glory is scattered about the earth—upon its hills and valleys and seas—and whose goodness finds food and shelter for beast as well as man. The psalms do much more than search the depths of the heart, and more is needed. They take us out into the open air, and make us lift up our eyes to the starry heavens (8, 19) and to the mountains of God. There are psalms in which man holds

[1] If we adopt the reading of the received text.

hardly any place at all: nothing is to be seen but sky and earth and the glory of God. How bracing, for example, is the psalm which describes the storm sweeping from Lebanon in the north with its sevenfold peal of thunder across the land to the wilderness of Kadesh in the south—whirling the oaks, shivering the cedars, stripping the forests—while the angels in heaven look on with pride and shout "Glory"! (29) Psalms like these, besides refreshing the spirit, and enlarging and invigorating our conception of religion, will help to recover for us the lost art of adoration (cf. 150).

In many respects, the psalms are immeasurably superior to every other collection of hymns, and not least in the extreme simplicity with which they utter the noblest religious truth and express the elemental things of religion. Their simple words produce a stupendous impression:

> O Jehovah, thy love is in the heavens,
> Thy faithfulness reacheth to the skies,
> Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God,
> Thy judgments are a great deep (36 : 5, 6.)

The largest things in the universe were the only things with which to compare the justice and the mercy of God. These men were at home with thoughts of infinity and eternity. In yet another respect is the superiority of the Psalter incontestable, namely, in its emphasis upon the moral elements in religion. The psalms are never flabby

or sentimental, but always strenuous and severe. They believe and rejoice in the stately worship of the temple. There is no time when the psalmist is so glad as when they say to him, "We are going to the house of Jehovah" (122 : 1). But they never allow themselves to forget that acceptable worship must be the fruit of a true life, and that the only man who dare ascend the holy hill is the man of clean hands and a pure heart.

The psalms are great because they have seized the eternal things. Most of them spring from a definite historical situation, yet in most cases the traces of their origin have utterly vanished, and they articulate the pain or gladness of the universal heart. Insensibly does the psalmist pass from the ruins of Jerusalem to the contemplation of the ruins of the universe (102). The experience of humanity is concentrated in the Psalter, which someone has described as "the whole music of the human heart, swept by the hand of its Maker." That is why age cannot wither its infinite variety, and why on the praises of Israel men will lift up their hearts to God, while the world stands.

## II

### SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW POETRY

#### 1. *The Form of Hebrew Poetry*

The principles that regulate the form of Hebrew poetry are as unique as is the poetry itself. Almost all that we are rightly or wrongly accustomed to associate with poetry is characteristically absent from the poetry of the Bible. It has no rhyme, though there are sporadic and insignificant traces of this. It has no metre, at least in the classical sense of that word: the attempt to make out hexameters and pentameters such as we find in Ovid and Theocritus, is hopeless in the face of the facts. It has no uniform strophic arrangement in the Greek sense of the word strophe—no regular recurrence of symmetrical sections whose corresponding lines accurately balance each other.

It has not indeed these things, but it has something profounder; for the Hebrew cared more for sense than sound. Instead of rhyme and metre, it gives us rhythm —not apparently of syllables, and not very conspicuously of words, but rather of thoughts and things. This distinguishing feature of Hebrew poetry was first happily characterized by Robert Lowth (1753) in his famous "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews" as parallelism, and the essence of it is that the second clause

of a verse, where there are two clauses, is in some way parallel to the first, whether as a repetition of the thought therein contained, or a co-ordination of an almost similar thought, or a contrast with the thought already expressed, or an amplification of that thought. Of these four types of verse, the second, which is known as the synonymous, and the third, which is known as the antithetic, are on the whole the most frequent and important. An illustration or two will make the usage clear :

Synonymous parallelism :

(a) Let us break their bands asunder
And cast away their cords from us (Ps. 2 : 3).
(b) Sun, be thou silent on Gibeon
And moon, in the valley of Ajalon (Josh. 10 : 12).
(c) Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands (1 Sam. 18 : 7).

Antithetic parallelism :

(a) A wise son maketh a glad father,
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother (Prov. 10 : 1).
(b) Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish (Ps. 1 : 6).

An illustration of synthetic parallelism, in which a new feature is added to the original picture, may be seen in the psalm last quoted :

He shall be like a tree planted by the channels of water,
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also doth not wither (Ps. 1 : 4).

It is fortunate, or rather we might say providential, that the characteristics of Hebrew poetry are what they are. For, in the first place, the form, being so elastic and so relatively little bound by verbal considerations, never fetters the thought: all that has to be said can be said with a powerful and unconstrained simplicity. And again, such poetry suffers next to nothing from translation into the prose of other languages. Indeed the prose translation is here the more natural and faithful. It has been said—and not without some truth—that the Psalter positively loses as much by being turned into verse as Homer does by being turned into prose. When we think how much would have been irretrievably lost in the best translation, had Hebrew poetry been characterized, like the poetry of modern languages, by rhyme or exact rhythm, it is hardly too much to regard it as a providence that the essence of that poetry lies not primarily in verbal or metrical considerations, but rather in that deeper response of thought to thought, which can be reproduced without loss in the stately prose of another language.

We said above that Hebrew poetry has neither metre nor strophe in the common sense of those terms. This is true, but with certain limitations. With regard to metre, it has been found that the verses in songs of lamentation usually assume the form of two lines, of which the second is shorter than the first, just as in the Greek or Roman elegiac. This is conspicuously so

in the first four poems of the Book of Lamentations. For example,

> How doth she sit so solitary—
> Once full of people! (1 : 1.)
> I am the man that has known misery
> Through the rod of his wrath (3 : 1).

This metre is usually known as the elegiac, or the qinah metre—qinah being the Hebrew for a dirge; but it has to be remembered, on the one hand, that this metre is not always used even in a song of mourning (cf. 2 Sam. 1 : 19-27), and on the other, that it is occasionally used, as in Psalm 19 : 7 ff., where there is no strain of lamentation at all.

With regard to the strophe. Though anything like the elaborate strophic arrangement of a Greek chorus is alien to the Hebrew genius, there are phenomena which prove conclusively that the Hebrews did occasionally recognize a certain arrangement which, for want of a better word, we may not unfairly call strophic, though it is equally certain that it is no regular constituent of Hebrew verse, and the attempt to discover it in every psalm must be recognized as futile. But the musical note *Selah*—whatever it originally meant—clearly indicates a pause of some kind and always coincides with a break in the sense. Further, refrains occur at intervals—though not apparently always regular—in many of the psalms (46, 56, 57, 59, 107, 136, etc.). Finally, a number of the psalms are alphabetic

—every line (as in Pss. 111, 112) or every verse (as in Ps. 34), or every second verse (as in Ps. 37) beginning with a new letter. This process receives its highest elaboration in the one hundred and nineteenth psalm, in which, within each of the twenty-two sections devoted to the successive letters of the alphabet, each of the eight verses has the same initial letter.[1] These facts only prove, what there can never have been any reason for doubting, that the Hebrews were capable of grouping their thoughts together and of creating a larger unit out of the verses thus grouped together; but they do not prove that they were familiar with the elaborated strophe of the Greek drama.

### 2. *The Descriptive Power of Hebrew Poetry*

Quite apart from its altogether unique religious value, Hebrew poetry can justly claim its place among the great literatures of the world. It combines a simplicity which they seldom equal with a brilliant but chastened imagination which is all its own. Its power is nowhere more vividly seen than in its descriptions of nature, which the rapt eyes of the Hebrew poet sometimes see touched into glad sympathy with redeemed humanity and lit with the glory of the latter days. In a word or two, he can produce the clearest pictures and the most startling contrasts. The sower with his tear-stained face is transformed by a touch into the glad reaper who comes home with his arm

[1] For illustrations of alphabetic psalms see Appendix I.

full of sheaves (126 : 5, 6). The only marriage-song in the Psalter (45) shines with all the brilliant splendor of the East. It opens the gates of an ivory palace and shows us trains of bejewelled ladies who enter to the ravishing sounds of music.

But it is in his descriptions of nature that the Hebrew poet is seen at his best; for the earth was his Lord's, and it was covered with something of his ineffable glory. He has the tenderest interest in all animal life, and a robust though not subtle appreciation of scenery. He delights in the twittering of the birds, and in the brooks that rush down the valleys; he has heard the lion roar, and he has looked with wonder upon the sea and the great ships (104). With awe-struck eyes, he has watched the storm when the heavens thundered and the lightning flashed, and the black clouds poured down water (77 : 17-19). He knows the terrors of the sea, when the waves rise mountains high, and the hearts of the travellers melt for fear (107 : 23-30). He has seen the wistful eyes of the wild beasts, as they looked up expectantly to Jehovah for their food (104 : 21 ; 145 : 15). The very mountains praise his name (89 : 12). For he is the mighty Lord, and when he draws nigh with his terrors, nature starts back in fear; the sea flees, the rivers roll back, and the hills tremble (114).

These scenes of terror are often matched by other scenes of quiet and gracious beauty, as when, in the glorious Messianic days, angels look lovingly down from the windows

of heaven, and righteousness and peace kiss each other in a world redeemed (85 : 10-11). Of almost startling beauty is that other picture, where all the land leaps into green as the wheels of Jehovah's chariot pass over it; the very desert pastures blossom, the happy hills are clothed with lambs, and the valleys laugh and sing (65).

### 3. *The Themes of Hebrew Poetry*

Practically all the poetry of the Bible is religious; but there are many traces that Hebrew poetry once dealt, as we should expect, with many other topics than religion. There was, for example, war poetry. The warfare which formed so conspicuous a feature of Israel's early life, was celebrated in stirring ballads, a brief specimen of which is still extant in the lines already quoted:

> Saul hath slain his thousands,
> And David his ten thousands.

Of course, as Jehovah was the God of Israel's hosts, much of the war poetry was necessarily also religious poetry—compare the songs of Deborah (Jud. 5) and Moses (Ex. 15); and there was a collection known as the Book of the Wars of Jehovah. Then there was the poetry which gathered about the home—such as we still find in fragments of the so-called Psalms of Ascent, or pilgrim psalms, though here again the religious touch is upon it (127 : 3-5; 128 : 3, 4). Further, the marriage-festival was cele-

brated in poetry, a precious specimen of which has been preserved to us in the forty-fifth Psalm. One of the noblest songs in any literature is written in memory of the dead and in celebration of their friendship (2 Sam. 1 : 19-27). Probably much of the business of daily life, most of which would then be in the open air, was accompanied by strains of song. To this class belongs the quaint, but difficult, Song of the Well (Num. 21 : 17, 18), and the work of the reapers and vintage gatherers seems to have been cheered or sustained by snatches of song (Ps. 129 : 8 ; Is. 65 : 8). At banquets songs were sung and poetic riddles were propounded (Jud. 14 : 14) ; and dirges were chanted at funerals. Of this large variety of poetry it is unfortunate that only the smallest fragments are extant; but they are enough to show that, for the Hebrew, life with all its common experiences, no less than religion, was ennobled by the ministry of song.

## III

### SOME PROBLEMS OF THE PSALTER

#### 1. *How the Psalter Grew*

It is very plain that the Psalter, though properly enough regarded as a unit, is in reality a collection of *groups* of psalms. This is admitted, on the face of it, by the division into five books, the concluding psalm of each book

(41, 72, 89, 106) being marked by a doxology, with the exception of the last psalm of the last book, which is itself a doxology. That these groups once existed separately, is shown by the fact that occasionally psalms from one group are repeated in another ;[1] had two such groups been really one from the beginning, there would have been no motive for the repetition. It would almost seem, too, as if each group had attained a certain canonicity before it was incorporated in the final collection ; otherwise a repeated psalm might easily have been omitted from one of the groups in which it appeared.

It was supposed in ancient times that the five-fold division of the Psalter was intended to imitate the division of the Pentateuch. This is probable, for it is difficult to justify the division on internal grounds. Psalms 105, 106, and 107 clearly form a group by themselves ; yet the traditional division of the Psalter cuts into this group, throwing 105 and 106 into book four and 107 into book five. Nor is it probably due to an accident that the number of psalms in the fourth book corresponds exactly with the number in the third ; this singular correspondence can only be regarded as intentional when we consider the fact just mentioned, that Psalm 106, the last in the fourth book, is inseparably bound up with Psalm 107. So far, at any rate, as the last two books are concerned, the division seems to rest on artificial grounds rather than on the facts.

[1] For example, 14 = 53 ; 40 : 13-17 = 70 ; 108 = 57 : 7-11 and 60 : 6-12.

Indeed, it is a fair question whether books four and five do not in reality constitute only one book. Speaking generally, they are more markedly liturgical than the other books, and in other ways they stand out by themselves from the rest of the Psalter.

One feature which they share in common and which differentiates them both from the second and third books, is their prevailing use of the word *Jehovah* as the name of deity. The second and third books, on the other hand, ordinarily use the word *Elohim*, that is, God; in the first book, again, the prevailing word is *Jehovah*. It would hardly be natural to suppose that this was an accident; but the psalms which are repeated from one group in another furnish proof positive that this peculiarity is actually due to editorial revision. When the fourteenth psalm, for example, appears in the second book as Psalm 53, the original *Jehovah* is found to have been carefully replaced by the word *Elohim*.[1] The two psalms are practically identical in all but their name for God, and clearly it is the place of Psalm 53 in an Elohistic collection that has determined the change in the name, which we can thus only regard as deliberate. Now this use of *Elohim* characterizes book three—or most of it (to ps. 83)—as well as book two, and suggests that books two and three ought

[1] True, the word *Elohim* also occurs in Ps. 14, but only in general phrases, where it is natural and appropriate; cf. v. 1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no *God*."

to be considered together, just as four and five were. We are the more confirmed in this opinion when we find that the constituent groups of both books are very similar; in both, for example, occur "Psalms of Asaph" and "Psalms of the Sons of Korah." The result then is to give us a division into three groups instead of five; the first book, Jehovistic; books two and three, Elohistic; and books four and five, Jehovistic.

These groups are found again to rest upon other shorter groups, some acknowledged and others easily discovered by examination. To the former class belong the psalms with definite ascriptions, for example, "of David." Whatever these words mean, they at any rate point to a collection, or collections, of psalms in some sense "Davidic." Other groups are almost equally obvious, for example, the Pilgrim psalms, 120 to 134, and the Hallelujah psalms, 146 to 150. The great hymn-book of the Hebrew church gradually grew out of smaller hymn-books, and these again ultimately rest on individual psalms.

## 2. *The Authorship and Superscriptions of the Psalms*

No problem seems so easy, and few are in reality so difficult, as to determine the ultimate origin of these individual psalms. Many of the superscriptions seem to contain information, as precise as it is welcome, with regard to the origin and occasion of the psalms to which they are attached. But it is quite certain that the superscriptions

are not original and integral to the psalms themselves, for the superscriptions of the Greek version do not quite agree with those of the Hebrew; sometimes they assign to David (cf. 95) or to other authors (for example, Haggai and Zechariah, cf. 146) a psalm which is anonymous in the Hebrew; and sometimes they add information which is not warranted by our Hebrew text (cf. 144, where to "David," the Greek version adds "touching Goliath"). The Syriac version again differs both from the Greek and the Hebrew. Had the titles been original to the psalms, such variety would have been impossible. Therefore it is fair to conclude that the titles are no part of the psalms, but were added afterward.

Further, the superscriptions are sometimes at variance with the explicit statements of the historical books. A curious illustration of this is found in Psalm 34, whose superscription calls the Philistine king, before whom David feigned madness, Abimelech instead of Achish (1 Sam. 21 : 14). Again, the superscriptions are sometimes at variance with the contents of the psalms themselves. For example, Psalm 59 contemplates a situation in which certain cruel and blasphemous men go about the city, whereas the superscription assigns it to the occasion when David's *house* was watched by Saul's emissaries. In the same psalm, the enemies of the singer are described as *the nations*, that is the heathen (cf. v. 5).

Nor can the names of the authors any more than the

occasions assigned in the superscriptions always be reconciled with the contents of the psalms. David, for example, could not have referred to the temple as Jehovah's holy hill (3 : 4), as, in his time, the temple had not yet been built. Still less could Asaph, a reputed contemporary of David, complain that that temple had been devastated (74). If, then, the superscriptions are not strictly reliable, it will be next to impossible to determine precisely the author of any psalm, and even the occasion can only be determined, if at all, by an examination of the psalm itself.

It may even be questioned whether the Hebrew phrase rendered "Psalm of David" was originally intended to imply authorship, though undoubtedly this must have been the view taken by the time the historical notices, which appear chiefly in the second book, were added. But there are cases where the idea of authorship is altogether excluded by the simple fact that the psalm is assigned not to a man but to a guild, namely, the sons of Korah, that is, the Korahitic guild of temple-singers (cf. 42 to 49). The psalms so superscribed form a collection which, for some reason that we are left to infer, was associated with this particular guild. In other words this title, together with the kindred title "Psalm of Asaph," appears to be a liturgical designation, the clew to which is now lost. Possibly the title "Psalm of David" is to be similarly explained, especially as it is often accompanied

by the certainly liturgical direction rendered "For the Chief Musician" in our English Bibles, and the Hebrew preposition rendered by "of" and "to" is in both cases the same. It is easy, of course, to see why later ages should have believed in David as the author of the psalms with which his name, for whatever reason, was associated. He was known to be a great minstrel and poet (cf. 2 Sam. 1), an ardent worshipper of Jehovah, and earnestly bent upon building him a temple; and so not unnaturally he came to be regarded not only as the father of religious song, but as the composer of much of the Psalter. Still, a tradition so persistent as is represented by the superscriptions, may well have had some basis in fact; and it is not impossible that the Psalter may contain fragments of Davidic song (cf. 24 : 7-10), though no one can say for certain where they are.

### 3. *The Place of History in the Psalms*

The historical notices contained in the superscriptions, whether valuable or not, at any rate furnish indirect testimony to a fact that should never be forgotten, namely, that many of the psalms rise out of definite historical situations. The experiences which they reflect may be personal or national, but they are often so graphic that one is constantly under the temptation to endeavor to assign dates to them. So far has this tendency been carried by Hitzig, who assigned the last three books of the

Psalter almost entirely to Maccabean times, that Nöldeke[1] expresses the sarcastic hope that in another edition of his commentary on the Psalms, he will supply not only the year, but the exact date of the composition of each psalm.

What would we not give to know definitely to what day the psalmist alludes when he wrote, "This is the day Jehovah has made" (118 : 24)? There are usually several competing possibilities; and many important periods of Jewish history are so obscure that these possibilities may be more numerous even than we suspect. Very probably there are heard in the Psalter the sad or happy voices of periods that have left no other echo. Occasionally the situation in a psalm is so graphic that our own hearts are moved with the powerful emotion of its early singers, and yet the language is so general as to defy the effort to assign it to a particular date. The one hundred and twenty-fourth psalm, for example, fairly throbs with passion. The dreadful enemies of Israel are compared in turn to a sea-monster, rushing waters, wild beasts, and cunning hunters; but who the enemies were we can only guess. The search is often further complicated by linguistic difficulties. For example, it is not always certain whether a particular Hebrew word is to be translated "the land" (that is, Judah) or "the earth." Again the word for "the arrogant" differs from the word for "strangers" merely by a "tittle"; and the word for "nations" (=heathen)

[1] Die alttestamentliche Literatur, p. 129.

has perhaps in some instances replaced an original word for "proud" which is extremely like it. This last circumstance leads to immense difficulty and confusion in the exegesis of certain psalms, and leaves open widely different possibilities of interpretation.

But amid all uncertainty we may be fairly certain of this, that a nation so highly gifted in song and religion as Israel can hardly have allowed to pass uncelebrated the great occasions of her national joy and sorrow. We know that the bitter grief of the exile was kept alive by the flaming words of the one hundred and thirty-seventh psalm; and it seems not unnatural to suppose that the deliverance of Judah from the terrors of Sennacherib may have been celebrated in the forty-sixth psalm, especially when we remember that those were the days of Isaiah; and it is easy to believe that the joy of redemption from exile expressed itself in the singing of the "new song," whose notes peal through the great group of psalms which proclaim Jehovah as king (92, 93, 95 to 100). But on such a field we cannot attain beyond more or less probable conjecture.

There is, however, one group of psalms, about which opinion has been almost unanimous, that we have in them a voice from the Maccabean times (about 170 B. C.), namely, 44, 74, 79, 83. In these psalms the situation is depicted with astonishing realism, and even with comparatively minute detail. There the people are not merely

suffering; they are the victims of a religious persecution —"killed *for thy sake* all the day long" (44 : 22); the enemy are not merely aliens, they are blasphemers (79 : 12). Above all, the temple is cruelly and wantonly assailed; the woodwork is struck with axes and the carving cut to pieces with hatchets (74 : 4 ff.). Most of the quite numerous indications seem to be precisely met by the assault of Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B. C. Yet the latest commentator on the Psalms, Dr. E. G. King, assigns these psalms to the age of Nehemiah, nearly three centuries before. Such fluctuation of competent opinion ought to teach us the complexity of the problems, and the improbability of attaining irrefragable conclusions, but it ought not to blind us to the important fact that very many of the psalms are not only inspired by the momentary passion of the singer, but rest upon the firm basis of history.

### 4. *Individual and Collective Psalms*

We said above that the experiences reflected in the psalms were sometimes personal and sometimes national. Of late, however, it has been doubted whether any psalm represents a strictly personal experience. The speaker is said to be rarely, if ever, the individual, but always the church, and the "I" and "my" of the Psalms are not to be taken individually but collectively. Now it is true that the Psalter, in some form, was the hymn-book of the Jew-

ish church in post-exilic times, and that the worshipping community appropriated and apparently even adapted earlier psalms to its own special use; but it is another question whether all the psalms thus sung had been intended from the beginning to voice the feelings of the community, or whether some of them had not originally a strictly individual and personal reference. The question is by no means an unimportant one. For example, Psalm 16 : 10,

> "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol,
> Neither wilt thou suffer thy loving one to see the pit,"

if interpreted individually, may[1] imply a belief in personal immortality; whereas, if interpreted collectively, it implies no more than an assured faith in the future of Israel.

At the first glance it would seem that many of the references are so minutely personal that any other than an individual interpretation is unnatural and impossible. We have, for example, references to birth (22 : 9), youth (22 : 5; 88 : 15), age and gray hairs. It is hard to believe that such a prayer as this :

> "Even unto old age and gray hairs,
> O God, forsake me not" (71 : 18),

[1] We cannot positively say must, even on this view: for the verse may only express the individual's confidence in his recovery from severe illness, or perhaps in his immunity from the sudden death which overtakes the wicked.

can be anything other than the prayer of an individual man for himself. Also there are other references, so definite and even graphic, to the sickness of the singer that it seems most reasonable to interpret them as the personal lament of a sufferer (6 and 38).

But here it is easy to deceive one's self by reading western ideas into oriental literature. It so happens that both these metaphors of age and sickness are used in other passages of the Old Testament where the reference is indisputably to the collective Israel.

Age:

Gray hairs are here and there upon him (that is, upon Ephraim or the people of Israel. Hosea 7 : 9).
Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob,
And all the remnant of the house of Israel,
Who are borne by me from the womb,
Who are carried from the lap,
And even to old age I am the same,
And even to gray hairs will I carry you (Isaiah 46 : 3, 4).

Sickness:

From the sole of the foot to the head
There is no soundness in it (that is, in Judah):
Wounds and bruises and festering sores (Isaiah 1 : 6).[1]

[1] Cf. Lowth's Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews (Lect. VIII on Poetic Imagery): "On reading these passages, some, who were but little acquainted with the genius of the Hebrew poetry, have pretended to inquire into the nature of the disease with which the poet was affected; not

The habit of personification is easy and natural to the Oriental; how easy, we see from Ezekiel's elaborate comparison of Israel and Judah to two faithless women (cf. 23 : 16). It was especially easy among a people like Israel, to whom, for long, the religious unit had been not the individual, but the nation. Such graphic metaphors, then, as we have been considering, must not be allowed to foreclose the question or to divert us from an investigation of the so-called "I-psalms."

A close examination of these psalms reveals facts which conclusively prove that the collective interpretation is not only possible, but often highly probable, and in certain cases necessary.

> Much have they afflicted *me* from my *youth* up
> Let *Israel* now say (Ps. 129 : 1).

Nothing could be clearer than this. It is hardly less clear in Psalm 118 : 10, where

> All nations compassed *me* about,

or in 27 : 3, where

> Though an host encamp against me,
> My heart shall not fear:
> Though war arise against me
> Yet will I be tranquil (27 : 3).

less absurdly, in my opinion, than if they had perplexed themselves to discover in what river he was plunged, when he complains that 'the deep waters had gone over his soul.'"

Nations do not surround, nor do hosts encamp against, an individual man.

Further, the situation occasionally changes within a psalm so suddenly—usually from entreaty to thanksgiving, though sometimes the reverse—that it is not always natural to explain the transition as due to the individual's sudden consciousness of answered prayer. Again, the psalms in which the singers assert their own righteousness (44) or call down curses upon their enemies lose much of that which makes them offensive to the moral sense, when they receive the collective interpretation. Further, the situation is often conceived on a scale so stupendous, and the consequences attached to the singer's salvation are so far-reaching that they are altogether inapplicable to the individual; note, for example, that it is a judgment of *the nations*, in which the psalmist prays to be acquitted (7 : 7, 8), and again, in 22 : 27, the ends of the earth are to be converted to the religion of Jehovah by the deliverance of the singer. These large implications are only satisfied by the assumption that it is the church that is speaking. This is put beyond all doubt by the ease with which the psalm can glide from the first person singular to the first plural (cf. Lam. 3 : 1-39 sing., 40 ff. plur.), or vice versa (Ps. 66 : 1-12 plu., 13-20 sing.).

There can be no doubt that there are more, probably far more, collective psalms than a cursory reading of the Psalter would lead one to suppose; but it is almost equally

certain that many of the psalms were originally individual. Any other interpretation tends to rob them of their spontaneity and freshness. Yet these psalms, like many of Cowper's hymns, which are also so intensely individual, could be fittingly adopted—in many cases without change—by the worshipping church, because a lyric which, rising above temporal and local considerations, expresses individual emotion with power and truth, is also an expression of universal experience.

# PSALMS OF ADORATION

# PSALMS OF ADORATION

## I

### INTRODUCTION

The name given by the Hebrews to the Psalter is *Sepher Tehillim*, or book of praises. It contains indeed many songs besides those of praise—some of them wrung from breaking hearts. But even in the saddest songs, with only one exception (88) there is an undertone of either hope or praise; and some of the noblest songs in the Psalter are altogether bursts of praise. Sometimes the praise rises from angel lips (29 : 9), sometimes from all the elements and forces of nature (148; 150), but oftenest of all from grateful Israel herself (103).

Nature reveals the power of Jehovah, and as truly, though less clearly, his love; therefore the heart of the Psalmist was often turned to songs of adoration, as he looked up to the sky or across the earth, and saw there Jehovah's might "writ large." It was he who executed the stupendous work of creation (104), a work inspired by love (33 : 5, 6), and it is his will that is done in all the marvellous processes of nature (147 : 15-18). By day and night the sky is eloquent

of his glory, with its flaming sun or its myriad stars (8 : 19). That glory flashes in the storm that sweeps across the land from Lebanon to Kadesh (29), and shines with the gentler light of love in the bounty with which the desires of every living thing are satisfied (104 : 21 ; 145 : 15).

It is all the more astonishing that a God, whose interests are sustained on so magnificent a scale, should care for so tiny and insignificant a creature as man ; and it is this "philanthropy" of God (cf. Titus 3 : 4) which touches the psalmist to his noblest, if not his most brilliant, flights of adoration. This great God is mindful of man and visits him with his grace (8 : 4). Indeed he makes it his peculiar task to stoop from his heavenly heights and lift the lowly out of the dust (113 : 7) and vindicate the cause of the oppressed (103 : 6). Especially does he care for Israel, or rather his love is exhibited with special clearness in his dealings with Israel, to whom he gave a revelation of himself (147 : 19, 20). The power which planted the stars in the heavens he wields in behalf of his needy people Israel, building her ruined city, healing her broken hearts, and gathering together her scattered sons (147 : 2-4). That is why history is so supremely worthy of study (111 : 2), because it is full of the greatness of Jehovah—the greatness of omnipotent love. For that loving will, which moved in creation, has also controlled the course of history (33 : 8-11), and his mercy is over everything that he has made. His kingdom covers all space and time (145)

and his throne is founded on justice and pity. He gives food to the hungry (145 : 15, 16) and forgiveness to the penitent (103 : 3), and so tenderly does he care for the interests of those who worship him that he is almost more like a father than a king (103 : 13). Yet, in the tenderness, we are never allowed to forget the splendor of him who sits on his throne in the heavens, robed in celestial light (104 : 2). To the psalmist, it is not enough that so glorious a God be adored by Israel alone. His praise must be sung by all the world from east to west (113 : 3), by fire and hail, by star and tree, by beast and bird, by man and maid (148). With a multitudinous song of praise that rises from an adoring universe, everything that has breath is called upon to praise Jehovah (150). Thus ends the Psalter—fitting conclusion to all the doubt and sorrow with which so many of its songs are full.

## II

### ADORATION OF GOD AS REVEALED IN NATURE

#### 1. *Jehovah's Glory in the Storm* (29)

Appeal to the gods to ascribe glory to Jehovah (1, 2)

Ye gods[1] in heaven above, ascribe glory to Jehovah, the Lord of you all; yea, glory and might ascribe to him, for these are his due. Kneel ye before him in holy array.

[1] Literally, sons of the gods. The reference is to the superhuman beings —whether we call them gods or angels—over whom Jehovah presides (cf. Job 1 : 6).

The storm begins. It sweeps across the land (3-9)

For his glory flashes in the storm. Look and listen as from north to south it sweeps across the land, with seven-fold peal of thunder. It comes from the sea, the great waters of the sea.[1] Israel's glorious God has thundered—thundered with might and thundered with majesty. The storm rushes to the mountains and shivers the cedars, even the giant cedars of Lebanon. Yea, Lebanon leaps like a calf and Sirion [2] like a unicorn. Rocks are cleft by the lightning's flames.[3] The storm leaps across the land to the wilderness of Kadesh, and makes it tremble. It whirls up the mighty oaks [4] and strips the forest bare. Then all the astonished gods, as they watch the storm from their palace in the skies, burst into a shout of praise, saying "Glory!"

It reveals Jehovah's sovereignty (10, 11)

From his throne Jehovah ushered in the storm.[5] He has proved himself the majestic Lord of all, and he remains Lord for ever and ever. This glorious God is Israel's God; and the strength he has shown in the storm he will impart to his people, and give them the blessing of peace.

[1] That is, the Mediterranean; or perhaps the sky, the waters above the earth.

[2] The Phœnician name for Hermon (Deut. 3 : 9).

[3] Possibly something has dropped out of v. 7, which is unusually short.

[4] Better, in this context, than "makes the hinds to calve." No consonantal change is necessary.

[5] The flood seems irrelevant here.

### 2. *The Witness of the Heavens to His Glory* (19 : 1-6)

The continual witness of the heavens to the glory of God (1-6)

Ceaselessly the heavens tell their story of the glory of God, the mighty God [1] who made and sustains them. By the noon-day and the midnight sky alike the silent tale is told, their voice [2] ringing out to the end of the world. In the heavens [3] he has set a tent for the sun which, beaming like a bridegroom that steps forth from the bridal chamber, enters like a hero, with joy upon his face, sweeping round the heavens from end to end, and shedding the heat of his beams over all.

### 3. *Jehovah's Goodness Revealed in Creation* (104)

The glory of God, as seen in inanimate creation (1-12)

I would call upon my soul to bless Jehovah. O Jehovah, my God, thou art very great, clad in awful splendor and covered with a robe of celestial light. Thou dost stretch out the heavens like a tent, supporting its beams in wondrous ways upon the sea. From the heaven above thou dost ride down to earth upon the swift storm-clouds. Thou makest the winds thy messengers, and the lightning thy minister. Thou didst found the earth on pillars which should sustain it unshaken forever. The waters stood up

[1] *El*, a word purposely chosen in distinction from Jehovah (v. 7 ff.), the giver of the law, who is distinctively Israel's God.

[2] Instead of *line*. Verse 3 by itself is quite poetic; but in this context, especially as the metre is against the verse, it is probably a prosaic interpolation.

[3] Or, by a probable emendation, "in the sea."

above the mountains, covering the earth as with a garment. But thy stern word of thunder made them speedily haste away to the boundaries which thou didst appoint for them, to keep them from returning to cover the earth. Then the mountains with the sloping valleys rose up into view, and through the valleys between the mountains the brooks began to wind their way, which quench the thirst of the wild ass and of all the beasts, and on whose banks the birds twitter their song from between the branches.

His kindness as seen in animate creation (13-18)

There is moisture, too, in abundance for the great cedars of Lebanon, planted by no human hand, where the birds build their nest, and the stork, whose home is the cypress. The wild goats roam on the high hills, and the conies hide among the rocks; but even to the hills thou givest drink from the clouds above and satisfiest the earth with rain and dew. Thou makest grass grow for the cattle; thou suppliest man with wine and bread to gladden and strengthen his heart, and with oil to make his face to shine.

Activities of night and day (19-23)

Thou didst make the moon to determine the festival seasons, and the sun has his hour for setting. Then, when the dark night comes on, the wild beasts begin to stir, and the young lions with angry roar demand their food from God. But when the sun rises, they go away again, and lie down in their lairs, and man goes forth to toil in safety till the eventide.

The wonders of the sea (24-26)

O Jehovah, how many are the works that have come from thy wise creator hand. The earth is full of thy creat-

ures. Yonder, too, is the great and spacious sea, where sail the ships, and within whose waters are moving things, small and great, without number. There is that strange monster Leviathan, whom thou hast created to play therein.[1]

Dependence of all upon God (27-30)

All thy creatures look to thee for food in due season, nor do they look in vain; for thou givest to them with open hand, and they gather and eat to their heart's content. When thou hidest thy gracious face, they are frightened. They die and go back to the dust whence they came, when thou takest away their breath; but a breath from thy lips creates them, and renews the face of the earth, as at springtide.

Gratitude to Jehovah for his fair works, stained only by sin (31-35)

O may the glory of Jehovah revealed in creation abide forever, and forever may he rejoice in his works, as of old! A glance of his makes the earth tremble; a touch of his causes the hills to smoke. I will celebrate his praise in music and song as long as I live. May he, in whom I delight, be pleased with this meditation, and from this fair world, so full of his goodness, may the godless be blotted out! Bless Jehovah, O my soul!

### 4. *Nature's Testimony to God's Love for Man* (8)[2]

The majesty of God (1, 2)

O Jehovah our Lord, how glorious is thy name in all the earth! I would sing of thy splendor in the heavens

[1] Or "with him."

[2] This psalm is a good connecting link between the first group of our psalms of adoration and the second. Both majesty and love are here.

with the stammering lips of a child—those heavens that thou hast established as a fortress, to silence thy vengeful foes.[1]

His gracious condescension (3, 4) in giving men dominion (5-8)

When I look at the midnight sky with the moon and the myriad stars all hung there by thee, I think in my heart, "What is man, frail child of the earth, that thou thinkest of him, and visitest him[2] with thy grace, making him but little less than divine,[3] and crowning him with glory and majesty; for thou hast made him lord over all thy creation, and put all things under his feet—beasts tame and wild every one, fowl that fly and fish that cleave the waters."

Final ascription of praise (9)

Now more than ever, as I think of this thy condescending love, would I humbly and gratefully sing, "O Jehovah, our Lord, how glorious is thy name in all the earth!"

[1] There can be little doubt that the text of v. 1c is faulty. The above paraphrase rests on Duhm's ingenious emendation. If the paraphrase of v. 2 is correct, the reference will be to the mythical enemies of Jehovah in primeval times, cf. Pss. 74 : 13 ff.; 89 : 10 ff.

[2] Ironically adapted by Job (7 : 17).

[3] Perhaps the nearest equivalent to the idea of the word in the original. The Greek translation, "the angels," is, strictly speaking, wrong, but gives the idea tolerably well. The translation of R. V., "lower than *God*," is impossible, as God is being addressed.

## III

ADORATION OF JEHOVAH FOR HIS LOVE TO HIS PEOPLE

### 1. *Jehovah's Marvellous Goodness* (103)

Jehovah is to be praised for his manifold blessings (1-5)

I would call upon all the powers of my being to bless Jehovah's holy name, in mindful gratitude for all that he has done for me. For he has forgiven all my sins, and healed the sickness of my soul.[1] He has redeemed my life from the grave, and set upon my head his crown of love and pity, and given me good things to my heart's desire,[2] so that, like the eagle, I am young once more.

His nature is pity and love (6-12)

Jehovah champions the cause of the oppressed, for his nature is love; and this he revealed long ago, both in the words that he spoke to Moses, and in the deeds that he did for Israel—that he was a God of pity and grace, a God of abounding patience and love, who does not chide or cherish his anger for ever.[3] He has not punished us as our sins deserved, for over those who fear him he spreads the canopy of his mighty love. He has put the length of the world between us and our sins.

Man is frail, but the love of God is eternal (13-18)

He cherishes toward us a fatherly pity; for he knows how weak and frail we were fashioned—mortals whose

[1] On the individual interpretation, the sickness may be literal.

[2] The meaning of the word rendered "mouth" in the English version is not clear (v. 5).

[3] Cf. 86 : 15. These passages rest on Exod. 34 : 6 f.

life is like the meadow-flower that blooms for a little, and then vanishes before the glowing wind that rushes up from the desert. But far other is the end of those who bear Jehovah's law in their hearts, for toward them and their offspring the love and mercy of Jehovah are eternal.

He is king as well as father; bless him, one and all (19-22)

Yea, and he is as mighty as he is merciful; for he is Lord of all. From his heavenly throne he rules the universe. O bless him then, ye valiant angels of his, that obediently do his bidding. Bless him, all ye starry hosts of his, and nature powers that do his will. Bless him, all ye works of his, far as his sway extends. Bless Jehovah, O my soul!

### 2. *Nature's Manifestations of Jehovah's Love and Power* (147)

Praise Jehovah for his omnipotent love (1-6)

Praise ye Jehovah our God, for it is good and seemly to sing his praises. He it is who builds the walls of Jerusalem, and gathers her outcasts home, and binds the wounded heart, for all power is his; he is the great and mighty God of infinite wisdom, who names and numbers all the stars. Those who are bowed he helps up, but the godless he brings down to the ground.

Jehovah's love manifested in nature (7-9)

Sing songs of thanksgiving, then, to him, and praise him with instruments of music, for he bringeth the black clouds over the sky, which pour rain upon the earth and make the grass grow upon the hills for the cattle and herb

for the service of man.[1] Even the ravens he feeds when they cry.

Jehovah cares naught for things of pride and strength. It is not in the mighty war-horse nor in the fleet runner that he delights, but in those who fear him and trust in his love. As he loves humble trust, so he hates pride (10-11)

O Jerusalem, praise Jehovah thy God, for he makes thy gates strong and brings peace to thy borders. He blesses thy people and feeds them with rich and abundant fare. His goodness to Jerusalem (12-14)

He sends forth his word[2] like an angel, and swiftly it runs to the earth, bringing the showers of fleecy snow, and scattering the hoar-frost like ashes, throwing down ice like crumbs, and freezing the very waters. Again he sends forth his angel-word, which raises a wind that thaws the waters so that they flow again. The revelation of his power in nature (15-18)

Jehovah's word is mighty in revelation as in nature; and that mighty word of his revelation he has given to Israel alone; for only to her, and not to another, has he imparted a knowledge of his law. Praise ye Jehovah. The revelation of his will to Israel (19-20)

### 3. *Jehovah the Preserver of his People* (33)

O Israel! sing glad songs of praise to Jehovah—for this is seemly—and play upon the cithern and harp. Sing a new song and play loudly to the sound of the trumpet. Call to Israel to praise Jehovah (1-3)

For the promises of our God to his people are sure, and

[1] So the Greek version. The verse is a quotation from 104 : 14.

[2] The word is personified.

His purposes are sure (4, 5)

faithfully he performs them. His reign is just and kind, for it is his delight to judge justly, and the earth is full of his kindness.

His love is seen in the creation and preservation of the world (6-9)

His love is as old as creation, when he made the heavens with their starry hosts, and by that love he still evermore sustains and preserves the world, keeping the waters of the sea in their place. Before this mighty God, the God of Israel, it is meet that every knee should bow in reverent fear; for he it was who called the world into being.

His love seen in the preservation of Israel from her enemies (10-17)

As his will was done in creation, so must it also be done in history. Therefore the purposes of the peoples who oppose him he utterly confounds, while his own purposes stand forever, and fulfil themselves throughout the generations. O how happy is the people that has him for their God—the people he has chosen for himself. From his dwelling-place in heaven he looks down upon the earth, and all the people upon it; and he sees the secret thoughts of all the hearts which he has made, and frustrates the purposes of those that are opposed to him, blessing the people whose trust is in him alone. For an army cannot save a king, nor can strength insure a warrior the victory; and even the help of a powerful warhorse is vain.[1]

[1] It is difficult to say whether this is a general or a particular assertion. If the verses (16, 17) have some definite situation in view, as it would rather seem, the mention of the king would make the psalm almost certainly pre-exilic.

But see! all true help comes from Jehovah. He graciously watches over all who fear him and hope in his love, preserving them from pestilence and famine. Therefore with glad and reverent confidence we wait for Jehovah; our help and defender is he. O our God! let thy mercy rest upon us, according as we hope in thee. May this love continue (18-22)

4. *Jehovah's Incomparable Power and Love* (115)

When we beseech thee to reveal thy glory, O our God, it is not for our sake, but for thine own, that the constancy of thy love to Israel may be plain to all the world, and that the heathen may no longer challenge us to prove that we have a God. Our God is invisible, for his home is in the heavens; but, unlike the heathen gods, he is omnipotent; all that he wills he does. Vindicate thy glorious name, O Jehovah (1-3)

The heathen idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths that cannot speak, eyes that cannot see, ears that cannot hear a prayer, nostrils that cannot smell the savor of sacrifice, hands that cannot feel, feet that cannot walk, and throats from which no sound can come. May those who make them and those who trust in them become impotent as they! Impotency of the heathen gods (4-8)

But far other is Israel's God. Ye people, priests, and proselytes, trust all of you in Jehovah,[1] for helper and defender is he.[2] Jehovah is trustworthy (9-11)

[1] The Greek version reads in v. 9 ff., Israel, etc., *hoped* in the Lord—a fact, not an appeal. [2] Note the refrain in the original.

Jehovah remembers and blesses his own (12-15)

Yea, he is mindful of us, and he will bless us, one and all—people, priests and proselytes too, both high and low. May Jehovah multiply and bless you! for he is the mighty creator of heaven and earth.

The living will bless Jehovah (16-18)

The heaven is his home, but the earth is his gift to men; and by the living men upon it, not by the silent dead beneath it, shall he be praised. So, as for us, we will bless Jehovah, now and evermore. Praise ye Jehovah.

### 5. *His Goodness Shown in Israel's Redemption* (111)[1]

The greatness, goodness, and justice of God (1-10)

I will give thanks to Jehovah with all my heart in the congregation of Israel the upright. For our history is full of his grace and power. Great are his deeds and worthy of study by all who love them. Glorious, majestic, and eternal is his salvation. He has made his marvellous deeds to be forever remembered. He is full of grace and pity. Food he gives to those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant. He revealed his power to his people by giving them Canaan for an inheritance. All that he does is faithful and right: all that he ordains abides eternally sure and steadfast, and is executed with unswerving justice. He redeemed his people out of Egypt, and thereafter gave them the law to obey forever.

[1] An alphabetic psalm. The alphabetic arrangement makes it quite certain that the initial "Hallelujah" is no part of the original psalm. There is seldom, if ever, a strict sequence of thought in the alphabetic psalms. For illustrations of alphabetic psalms, see Appendix II.

Holy and awful is he; to acknowledge him is the essence of wisdom: the men who do this are men of insight. His praise endureth forever.

### 6. *Jehovah's Love to the Lowly* (113)

Praise Jehovah, ye his servants, praise his name. Blessed be his name, now and forever. Praised be his name by all peoples from east to west. Praised be Jehovah, the wide world over (1-3)

Exalted is he above the whole world, exalted his glory beyond the heavens. What god is like Israel's God, who from his lofty throne in heaven looks down to the earth upon the crushed and needy, and raises them up from the dust and dunghill, and places them by the side of the nobles of his people? He assures the barren woman of a home,[1] and makes her the happy mother of children. For though high, he graciously condescends to the lowly (4-9)

### 7. *An Invocation* (117)

Let all the world praise Israel's God, for his love and constancy toward us are mighty and everlasting. Call to praise (1, 2)

## IV

### ADORATION OF JEHOVAH'S GLORIOUS KINGDOM

### 1. *Jehovah's Just and Gracious Rule* (145)[2]

I will extol thee, my God, O King, forever, and praise thy name continually. Thy greatness is unsearchable,

[1] That is, apparently, prevents her dismissal. [2] An alphabetic psalm.

Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever (1-21)

and thou art worthy of all praise. One age proudly tells to another the story of thy mighty works. They tell with joy the wondrous tale of thy glorious and terrible deeds, in which was revealed thine abundant and memorable love: and their story of thy great and wondrous works I too will ponder and tell. Thou art a God of grace and pity, of great patience and love, kind and pitiful toward all that thou hast made.[1] All thy works praise thee, thy saints bless thee, telling to the world of thy might and thy glorious kingdom, whose sway is everlasting. Thou art faithful in all thy words, and gracious in all thy deeds,[2] supporting those who fall, and lifting those who are bowed down, in due season supplying from thine open hand the needs of all thy creatures, as they turn to thee with expectant eyes. In deed and word thou art gracious and kind, ready to hear the cry of all who call upon thee in sincerity, ready to help and satisfy and save. All who love thee thou dost preserve, but the wicked thou dost destroy. May praise and blessing rise to thy holy name, not from my lips alone, but from the hearts of all men everywhere forever!

### 2. *Jehovah the Unfailing Protector* (146)

Jehovah worthy of all confidence (1-4)

I would call upon my soul to praise Jehovah my God, I would praise him in song as long as I live. For he

[1] V. 8, cf. 103 : 8. [2] This verse is added from the Greek. It represents the *n*-stanza, which is wanting in the Hebrew.

is God Almighty, and worthy of all confidence. It is folly to put confidence in princes, who are but impotent mortals, with bodies that return to the dust and purposes that perish when the breath of life is gone.

His manifold grace (5-10)

But happy is the man whose hope and help are in the God of Israel, the great creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them. He is ever faithful to the cause of the oppressed: he feeds the hungry, and sets the prisoners free. He gives sight to the blind, and he raises the fallen. He loves the righteous, defends the stranger, sustains the orphan and the widow; but the godless he turns into paths that lead to ruin. O Zion, thy God is King, world without end.

## V

### NATURE'S CALL TO UNIVERSAL PRAISE

#### 1. *The Universal Acclaim* (148)

Praise Jehovah, all that is in heaven (1-6)

Let heaven and earth and all that is therein praise Jehovah for his redemption of Israel.

Praise him from the heavens on high, all ye his angel hosts, sun and moon and stars of light, ye highest heavens, together with the heavenly ocean. Praise ye Jehovah's name, for by his command ye were ushered into being, and by his power ye eternally stand in obedience to his law, which ye may not transgress.

Praise Jehovah, all that is on earth, animate and inanimate (7-12)

Praise Jehovah from the earth : the deep and its monsters, fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind that does his bidding, mountains and hills, fruit-trees and cedars all, beasts wild and tame, things creeping and winged. And last and highest of all let man[1] join in the universal acclamation : kings and peoples all, princes and judges all, youths and maidens, old and young. Praise ye Jehovah, for his name alone is exalted : his glory stretches over earth and heaven. He has advanced to honor the people he loves, even Israel, whom he has brought into fellowship with himself, and they praise him, one and all.

### 2. *A Triumphant Burst of Praise* (150)

Universal praise (1-6)

Praise God in his heavenly sanctuary. Praise him in his mighty firmament. Praise him according to his mighty deeds and his abundant greatness. Praise him, ye priests, with the trumpet. Praise him, ye Levites with the harp and cithern. Praise him, ye women, with the timbrel. Praise him, ye people all, with dance and stringed instrument and pipe, with the clear and clashing cymbals. Let everything that breathes praise Israel's God.

[1] Man last, as in Genesis 1.

# PSALMS OF REFLECTION

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## I

### INTRODUCTION

To judge by their extant literature, and by the general cast of their mind, the Hebrews had no genius for speculative thought. Sustained reflection of any kind seems to have been alien to them; and, when we do find something approaching to it, as we do in the Book of Job, it concentrates itself upon the problems of moral experience. But, though there is little connected discussion, there is, in the psalms, many a swift, deep glance into the problems, which shows how keenly they were felt by the more earnest spirits of Israel (73 : 21). Life was felt at times to be fleeting and empty, like a breath or a phantom (39 : 5, 6), frail as a dream or a wild flower (90). Men who looked frankly at it with the desire to find the presence of God there and the recognizable operations of divine law, had often to confess that their hopes were not satisfied by the facts.

The ugliest of those facts was the presence of the wicked (104 : 35 ; 139 : 19 ff.), and the most torturing was

his prosperity. The background of the psalms, against which the sorrowful figures of the psalmists stand out, is anything but an attractive one. There the cruel are gathered together, and the immoral, and the unbelieving, swaggerers and traitors and liars—a motley crowd of knaves and fools. Indeed, to the Hebrew, the knave is the fool: nothing is so stupid as atheism and immorality (14 : 1 ; 82 : 5). They make the life of the psalmists a bitter struggle, and are a sore stumbling-block to a radiant faith. The psalmists look up to heaven with tears upon their faces; but when they look up, they see, though afar off, the answer incarnate. For the ultimate answer to all the moral anomalies of which the world is too full is that "Jehovah is in heaven; and his eyes behold men" (11 : 4). He does more than behold; he remembers and will punish the evildoer with all the terrors of his omnipotence (11 : 6). The easy-going sceptic he will make to tremble (14 : 1, 5), and as for the lying and treacherous braggarts, he will tear them out of their tents and root them out of the land of the living (52 : 5). With a God like this, who can make himself so terribly felt, the psalmist may well counsel his soul to silent submission. The champions of oppression shall fall (82 : 7), and very often by their own devices (7 : 15, 16).

Not only in the certain and often obvious doom of the wicked does the righteous find an answer to the doubts of his heart, but he has a positive satisfaction of his own.

His life is watched over by a divine providence. God does not forget his "pilgrim and stranger"; he acts as his host, his shepherd (23), his sentinel (121). Either by himself or through the ministry of his angels (34 : 7; 91 : 11), he preserves from peril the soul that trusts him: neither demons nor war nor pestilence can lay their cruel fingers upon him (cf. 34 : 17). Besides the inner steadfastness which comes from trust (112 : 7), and besides the blessed consciousness of having God for his portion (16 : 5), he has often also that other satisfaction—so dear to the Old Testament upon all but its very highest levels—of enjoying an outward prosperity (1). He is happy, prosperous (112) and long-lived (34 : 12; 91 : 16; 128 : 6), has a fruitful wife (128), strong sons and comely daughters, and abundance of sheep and oxen (144 : 12-15).

It is well that there were men whom so simple a solution did not satisfy—men to whom it was only too plain that they might innocently suffer (44 : 17-22), that the righteous did not always dwell in peaceable possession of a promised land, nor were the wicked always overtaken by swift destruction (37). Wherein, then, did these profounder spirits find their consolation? They found it in the faith that, for the righteous at least, death was not the end, that God would not abandon their soul to Sheol, but would redeem them from the power of the grave and take them to himself (49 : 15); and the noblest spirit of them all found "a stronger faith his own" in the sweet assurance,

which the world could neither give nor take away, that even in this life, God was always with him:

> Nevertheless I am continually with thee (73 : 23).

For average piety, the knowledge of the divine will was mediated by Scripture, which was regarded in post-exilic times as God's unique gift to Israel, by which he distinguished her above every other nation in the world (147 : 19, 20). The "law," as it is called—chiefly no doubt what we now call the Pentateuch—was all but worshipped (119 : 48) and its praises are sung now in simple (1), now in elaborate verse (119), which shows how long and lovingly men meditated upon it, and how devoutly they believed it to be the lamp of their feet and the light of their path. One of the marks of the good man is that he meditates upon it day and night (1 : 2).

The good man is elsewhere more particularly defined and characterized both upon his negative and positive side. He is sincere, and straightforward, just in word and deed, incorruptible and above the temptation to slanderous gossip, clean of heart and pure of hand ( 15 : 1-5; 24 : 3, 4; 34 : 13, 14). It is to the everlasting glory of the Psalter that, though much of it was composed for, and all of it employed in the temple worship, where rite and sacrifice played so conspicuous a part, it repeatedly and deliberately repudiates the efficacy of mere sacrifice. Sacrifice might be a useful and even an important adjunct of wor-

ship ; but on any view of the teaching of the three psalms in question (40, 50, 51), it is not indispensable ; and those who bring to their sacrifice thievish hands or slanderous lips or adulterous hearts, are warned that it is their doom to be torn in pieces (50 : 16-22).

## II

### REFLECTIONS ON THE MORAL ORDER OF THE WORLD

#### 1. *The Courage of the Man of Faith* (11)

The speech of the coward (1-3)

My God is my refuge. Why then do ye tell me to flee, like a bird, for refuge to the hills? Ye seek to make me play the coward. Look, ye tell me, the godless are just about to shoot. They are bending their bow. Their arrow is already on the string, to be secretly shot at the upright. The pillars of law and order are being torn down : and what has the good man, for all his virtue, been able to accomplish?

The triumphant answer of faith (4-7)

Such is your cowardly speech ; but it does not affright me. For my God is just and omnipotent, he sits enthroned in his heavenly palace. His eyes wander over the earth ; he watches and weighs the deeds of men—of the good and the bad alike ; and to each he will give his due reward. With the champion of wrong, whom he hates, he will deal as he dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah, raining

coals, fire, and brimstone upon them, and pursuing them [1] with the hot breath of the desert wind. But a gracious destiny awaits the upright; for the faithful Jehovah loves to show himself faithful, and for reward they shall behold his face.

### 2. *The Folly of Denying God* (14) [2]

Prevailing atheism and immorality (1-3)

Very plainly has God shown the folly of denying his presence in human affairs. For there were some who in their folly thought in their hearts that there was no God, and their impious creed [3] expressed itself in corrupt and odious conduct. But Jehovah was watching from the windows of heaven to see if there were any men of sense, any who cared for God. But no! one and all they had gone astray, and become corrupt. There was not a man who did good—not so much as one.

The divine judgment upon it (4-6)

But one day those sinners were brought to their senses, and made to feel Jehovah's heavy hand. They had cruelly oppressed their brethren.[4] They had eaten Jehovah's

[1] Literally, the scorching wind is the portion of their cup, that is, to drink. As this is a metaphor for destiny, the above paraphrase, involving a different figure, gives the general sense.

[2] This psalm is repeated in book two as Psalm 53. The variations between 14 : 6 and 53 : 5 are due to textual difficulties, and rest, no doubt, upon a common original.

[3] Practical, not theoretical atheism: cf. Zeph. 1 : 12.

[4] Some think that heathen oppressors are meant, but 4c does not support that conclusion.

bread,[1] while they had not called upon his name. At last the blow fell; and, in their consternation, they were forced to see that God is with the righteous. Their cruel designs against the poor were brought to shame,[2] for Jehovah, whom the oppressors denied, interposed to save them.

O how glad would we be if only the God whose temple is on Zion's hill would come forth to change our fortunes, and show himself our saviour. Prayer for better fortune (7)

### 3. *The Triumphant Power of Divine Love* (36)

The rise and progress of sin is after this manner. First it utters its oracular word in the bad man's[3] heart, and he has no fear of God to deter him from cherishing it. Then it goes on to flatter him in his own eyes. . . .[4] After that, the hidden thought passes into speech, and utters itself in evil and deceitful words. Then the sinner ceases to act with prudence: he plots deliberate mischief, enters on a course of wrong, and finally learns to love the evil. The rise and progress of sin (1-4)

[1] So Duhm, cf. Lev. 21 : 22. Baethgen suggests "had devoured a people already devoured by war," and refers the punishment hinted at in vv. 4-6 to the deportation in 597 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 24 : 12-16).

[2] Emended text.

[3] Septuagint, "his," not "my."

[4] It seems quite impossible to translate 2b satisfactorily.

The everlasting and abounding love of God (5-9)

Yet the ultimate triumph shall not be his;[1] for thou, Jehovah, art mindful of thine own. Thy rule, which is merciful and just, stretches throughout the universe. Thy faithful love reaches to the sky. Thy judgments are deep as the ocean and firm as the mountains. Thou art the saviour of man and beast. How precious is thy love, O God! In thy protecting providence we trust. For we are thy guests on earth, and in thy house we enjoy a gracious and abundant hospitality. Thou art the source of life and gladness. When thy face shines upon us, all is well.

May the divine love continue to triumph (10-12)

O let the godly continue to enjoy thy love![2] Never may the proud foot trample upon me, nor the godless hand drive me out of the land.[3] Already in vision I see the wicked prostrate, without the power to rise.

### 4. *The Vanity and Pathos of Life* (39)

Resolution not to murmur (1-3)

I resolved to watch my words, and carefully to abstain from murmuring against my unhappy lot; for there were godless ones about me, who would have mockingly re-

[1] The connection between this and the preceding paragraph is not very clear. It may be as given above; or it may be this, that, after all, such wickedness, oppressive to the good man as it is, is small in comparison with the infinite goodness of God: cf. 52 : 1.

[2] In v. 10, "righteousness" is practically equivalent to "love," with which it is parallel. So often.

[3] Or perhaps temple.

joiced had they heard me complain of the ways of my God. So I remained altogether silent and uttered not a word, though my pain was stirred up within me; my heart was hot, and burning thoughts tormented me.

The pathos of life (4-6)

I prayed in silence [1] that thou wouldest teach me how near my end was, and how brief my life. Yea, is it not very brief—but a span, and as nothing in thy sight, and man is but a breath. He moves about as a shadow; his life is full of empty noise; he heaps up and knows not who shall gather.

Prayer that God may show his pity (7-13)

What, then, has life to yield? My heart yearns for the substance beyond the shadow. O my God, my hope is in thee. Save me from sin and the chastisement it brings, lest I become the scorn of the fool. I am altogether silent; for it is thy hand that has wrought this thing. But oh! remove that heavy hand of thine from me, for I am crushed to earth. With chastisement thou dost chastise man for his sin, withering his beauty like the moth; man is but a breath. O listen, when I beseech thee with loud crying and tears; for thou art my Lord and protector in the strange land of my sojourning. Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I go away and be no more.

[1] The present text of 3c runs: I spoke with my tongue—that is, in his excitement, he forgot his resolution. But this is contradicted by v. 9; so Duhm's emendation, "I said in quiet," may be accepted provisionally.

## 5. *The Doom of Arrogance* (52) [1]

The boast of cruel arrogance (1-4)

Why dost thou brag, O blatant hero, of the ruin thou art ceaselessly working for the man who is godly,[2] with thy sharp and deadly tongue? Thine affections are set on evil and falsehood, on ruinous and deceitful words, and not on goodness and truth.

The inevitable fate of arrogance (5-7)

Thou shalt have thy reward. God will make an utter end of thee, seizing thee as one seizes coal with the tongs. He shall tear thee out of the tent, and root thee out of the land of the living, to the delight of the righteous, who shall mock when they see it. Such is the fate of the man who presumptuously trusts in the power of his vast riches,[3] instead of in God.

The destiny of him who trusts God (8, 9)

But I, too, have my reward. I flourish like the green olive-trees in the temple court,[4] because my trust is in the

[1] Dr. E. G. King calls attention to the similarity between the situation implied by this psalm, and the treatment Jeremiah received from the men of Anathoth, and especially from Pashur (Jer. 11 : 21 ; 18 : 18-23 ; 20 : 1-13). Graetz thinks that the psalm was composed by a Levite against a false and wealthy priest.

[2] The thought in the text of 1b is very beautiful : "the mercy of God is all the day." This is the great fact of the universe, which has to be set over against the temporary vexations due to the prominence of evil and the seeming triumph of wrong. But it may be doubted whether so abrupt an utterance of this kind is quite in place in this context. The above paraphrase rests upon a very simple emendation.

[3] "Riches" instead of "wickedness" (v. 7) ; emended text.

[4] There may have been such trees in the temple precincts ; or the phrase "in the temple court" may go with the words "I flourish."

mercy of God continually. I will praise thee forever because of thy providence, and I will proclaim thy goodness in the presence of those who love thee.

### 6. *God the Only Source of Confidence* (62)

Patience and hope in spite of malicious attack (1-4)

I would call upon my soul to be silent in God; for he can help me. Yes, he is my rock and my fortress; I shall not be shaken too sorely, though the assault is indeed very fierce. How long are ye going to assail me[1] with your shouting and your murderous designs to hurl me to the ground, like a wall already tottering? They are secretly planning to rob me of mine honor—liars and fair-faced hypocrites, as they are.

Confidence in God (5-8)

O troubled soul of mine! be still in God, for he can help thee. Yes, he is my rock and my fortress, I can never be shaken. Mine honor and my safety are with my God: yes, he is my strong rock and refuge. Put your trust in him, all ye people,[2] and pour out your heart before him, who alone is our refuge.

Trust not in ill-gotten gains, but in God who can requite (9-12)

For what is man? High or low, he is nothing but a breath and an illusion, lighter than air when laid in the balance. Yes, put your trust in God, and not in the unholy gains of robbery: when the wicked grow wealthy, care not. For there came to me this solemn message,

[1] The man, of v. 3, is apparently the speaker, or at any rate, the people he represents.

[2] So Septuagint, "all the congregation of the people."

that God is strong as well as gracious, and will recompense every man as his deeds deserve.

### 7. *God the Impartial Arbiter of Destiny* (75)

Song of gratitude (1)

We invoke thy name, O our God, and with all our heart we would render thee thanks and tell of the wondrous things thou hast done for us.[1]

God preserves the moral order (2-5)

For, when the righteous cause seemed doomed to perish, thou didst intervene to save it; and these were the words thou didst utter: "Though the world and its peoples dissolve, yet I have set its pillars firm. Confusion may reign for a while, yet in time it will be seen that the divine government is just.[2] I bid the foolish braggarts cease their bragging, and I command the godless to give over their haughty pride and their impudent speech against high heaven."[3]

God is the arbiter of human destiny (6-8)

It is not by accident, but by divine law, that men receive their places—one high, another low. Not from the east or west or south or north[4] does the allotment come,

[1] This translation is based on the Septuagint.

[2] This represents the general sense of v. 2a, but the precise interpretation is very obscure. Wellhausen: "Verily I seize the right time." Duhm: "Though I take a respite."

[3] In 5b, for "Speak not with a stiff neck," read, following the Septuagint, "speak not arrogant things *against the rock*," *i.e.*, God.

[4] The desert = the south. The word rendered in the English version by "promotion" or "lifting up," should probably be "from the mountains," that is, the north.

but from the divine government of the world. For in Jehovah's hand there is a cup of foaming wine well spiced, and out of this he pours a draught for the godless [1] to drink, and they have to drink it down to the dregs.

But as for me, everlasting joy [2] is mine, and I will sing praise to Israel's God; for he [3] dashes down the wicked in their pride, but he lifts up the righteous. His righteous dealing (9, 10)

### 8. *God the Upholder of Justice* (82) [4]

The God of Israel has summoned together the rulers of the world, and has taken his stand among them to judge and pronounce sentence upon them. And thus he speaks: The divine arraignment of the unjust rulers (1-4)

"As rulers divinely appointed, it was your duty to govern justly, to deal fairly with the oppressed and fatherless, to acquit the innocent poor, and to save the needy from extortion.

But ye are void of sense. Ye have no knowledge or insight into the nature of things. Ye grope about in the dark, and through your ignorance and imbecility the pillars of society are tottering, though it is by my decree that ye hold your divine and exalted office. But your dignity Their immoral folly and its punishment (5-7)

[1] The Greek version directly says what the metaphor itself suggests, that the cup is for *all* men to drink. In that case the cup would not be the cup of wrath, but of destiny.

[2] The Greek version reads "I will rejoice" for "I will declare."

[3] If "I" is correct, the reference will be to Israel.

[4] This psalm is closely akin in spirit to Ps. 58. For the meaning of "gods" (v. 1) cf. note on Ps. 58 : 1.

shall not avert the doom. Ye shall die like common men, and fall like any mortal prince." [1]

Yearning for manifestation of divine justice (8)

O my God! be pleased soon to fulfil this dream of thine omnipotent sway. Arise, and judge the world, for all nations are thine by inheritance.[2]

### 9. *The Lessons of Divine Providences* (90)

The frailty of man in contrast with the eternity of God (1-6)

O Lord! Thou hast been our eternal home. Ere mountains or earth were brought forth, thou wert, O God, and thou dost continue from everlasting to everlasting. At thy bidding the frail generations of men return to the dust. Ages are in thy sight but as a day when it is done—brief as a watch in the night. The generations of men are ever changing. They blossom in the morning like the meadow flower, to wither and perish in the evening.

The sorrow of life is due to sin (7-10)

The sorrow of our life is due to our sin. For this fierce anger of thine, which confounds and destroys us, has been kindled by our transgressions, which, though we ourselves may know them not, are yet plain in thy sight. For under thy sore anger all our days have vanished away. When our years are over, they are but as a murmur. Though they mount to seventy or eighty, yet

[1] Duhm ingeniously suggests, "like one of the demons" (cf. Gen. 6 : 1-4). The Hebrew words for "demons" and "princes" differ only by a "tittle."

[2] Or, by a simple emendation of Wellhausen's, "thou rulest over all the nations."

is their glory but toil and emptiness: for it hastens away, and like a bird we are gone.

May God instruct, forgive, and restore (11-17)

O how few there be that lay to heart the meaning of thy fierce anger. Teach us to understand this, and to number our days in the light of this knowledge, that our hearts may reap a harvest of wisdom. O our God! come back to us. How long wilt thou tarry? Have pity upon us thy servants. After the long night of sorrow, let thy mercy dawn upon us, and be with us all our days, filling our hearts with joy and gladness, as deep as is the sorrow that has been ours in the years gone by. Interpose for thy servants' sake, and manifest thyself in some glorious deed. Set thy favor upon us, O our God, and establish the work we are striving to do.

## 10. *The Ways of God* (92)[1]

Jehovah is worthy of praise for the great things he has done (1-4)

It is pleasant, morning and evening, to proclaim thy love and thy faithfulness, O Jehovah, God most high, in song and music, upon harp and cithern, and instruments of ten strings. For, by what thou hast done, thou hast made me to shout for joy.

The destiny of the godless (5-11)

O how great thy works are, and how profoundly planned, too profoundly for the fool to understand; for he does not see that when godless sinners shoot up and blossom, it is only that they may be utterly annihilated in

[1] The theme of this psalm is no doubt the deliverance celebrated in Pss. 93 to 100.

the end. But thou art exalted, O my God, forever; for see! thine enemies perish, all the wicked are scattered, but thou dost lift me to honor and anointest me afresh with the oil of thy grace. Mine eyes shalt feast upon mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear with joy the story of their doom.

The destiny of the righteous (12-15)

But the righteous shall flourish long as the palm, and fair as the cedar of Lebanon—planted[1] beside the temple and flourishing. Even in old age they are fresh and fruitful, proclaiming by their vigor and beauty to all the world, that Israel's God rules the world with justice and impartiality.

### 11. *The Divine Judgment upon the Godless* (9, 10)[2]

Jehovah's judgment on the godless (9 : 1-6)

With all my heart I will render thee thanks, O my God, and tell the story of all thy marvels. I will rejoice and be glad in thee, and sing praises to thy name, O thou most high, because thou didst turn mine enemies back; they

[1] The reference is to the people, not to the trees. Even if there were trees in the temple precincts (cf. 52 : 8 and note), these cannot have been cedars.

[2] Psalms 9 and 10 originally constituted one psalm. This is proved by the alphabetic arrangement, which runs through most of Ps. 9 (to v. 17) and reappears toward the end of Ps. 10 (v. 12); and by the further fact that Ps. 10 has no superscription in the Septuagint. The theme of Ps. 9, which is thanksgiving, is interrupted in Ps. 10, which is mainly a plaint, but the confident and grateful tone is resumed at v. 16. Vv. 1-15 of Ps. 10 must have displaced the original verses of the psalm, in order to adapt it to a new situation. Ps. 9 may be fittingly placed after Ps. 92, as in both the reflection on the moral order takes the form of thanksgiving.

stumbled and perished at thy presence. For thou didst deal justly from thy judgment throne, maintaining my cause, rebuking and destroying the godless nations, and blotting out their name for evermore. The foe is vanished : their cities thou hast destroyed. They shall lie in ruins forever—to be remembered no more.

Gratitude for the deliverance (9 : 7-14)

Yes, they perish, but Jehovah sits forever on his judgment throne, judging the world and the peoples thereof justly and rightly, thus proving himself a refuge to the wretched and the sore perplexed. Yes, those who, like Israel, have proved thee, put their trust in thee ; for never, O Jehovah, dost thou forsake those who look to thee for help. Sing praises to our God, whose temple is on Zion's hill, proclaim to all the world the mighty deeds he has done for Israel, and thus the world will be brought to acknowledge her God as God alone. He has listened to the cry of those who were crushed, and championed their cause, as the avenger of blood. Yea, Jehovah in pity has looked on my misery, and drawn me back from the brink of destruction, to the end that I should tell within Jerusalem's gates [1] the glad story of how gloriously he helped me.

Nemesis (9 : 15-18)

For he caught the nations [2] in the trap which they had set for me ; Jehovah hath made himself known. He

[1] Intentional contrast between the gates of Jerusalem (v. 14) and the gates of death (v. 13).

[2] If, with Duhm, we read " the proud "—the words are not unlike in the Hebrew—the oppressors of Ps. 9 no less than of Ps. 10, will be Israelites, not foreigners.

hath plainly passed judgment upon the godless by entangling them in the work of their own hands. They shall pass away out of sight and out of mind. They who forget God shall themselves be forgotten. But not so the poor and needy: never shall they be forgotten or disappointed. . . .

Prayer (9 : 19, 20)

Bestir thee, Jehovah, let not man defy thee. Bring the nations to thy bar for judgment. Strike them with terror[1] and make them to feel that they are but mortal men.

Oppression of the poor and innocent (10 : 1-11)

We are in distress, O our God. Why dost thou remain in heaven and neither look nor listen? For the proud and godless man is fiercely persecuting the helpless. O grant that his schemes may recoil upon his own head. His worship is hypocrisy, for his soul is full of greed. In the pride of his heart he despises Jehovah,[2] thinking all the while, "He does not punish; there is no God." Continual prosperity is his. Thou art in heaven, and thy judgments do not smite him. As for his enemies, he scoffs at them every one. He says to himself that he will always keep his feet and never know misfortune—he whose mouth is full of cursing and treachery, and his tongue a very storehouse of ruin! He is both cunning and cruel,

[1] Baethgen and Wellhausen translate: "set a teacher over them." "Teacher" and "terror" are not unlike in the Hebrew. (So the Greek version—lawgiver.)

[2] The precise interpretation of v. 3 is difficult and disputed.

for he lurks in corners[1] to murder the innocent, spying out those in misfortune. Like a lion in a thicket he lurks, to pounce upon the defenceless, and drag him off in his net; and his poor victim sinks prostrate and falls into his clutches. He says to himself: "God forgets, he turns away his face, he never sees it."

Prayer that it be brought to an end (12-15)

Show him, O God, that thou dost not forget; rise and smite him with thine uplifted hand. Why is it that he despises thee, saying to himself that thou dost not punish? For very well thou seest: and thou wilt avenge the grief and sorrow of his victims, helping the helpless and the orphan who commits his cause to thee. Destroy the power of the godless, and let evil perish, so that it will not be found, though one seek it never so earnestly.

The ultimate triumph of the oppressed (16-18)

Then the Kingdom of God will come, with Jehovah on the throne for ever and ever, and no heathen left in his land. Surely, O Jehovah, thou hast lent an attentive ear.[2] Thou hast answered the longings of the needy. Thou hast executed justice for those who were crushed and fatherless, so that they need never fear any more.[3]

[1] The Hebrew text (v. 8) reads: in lurking places *of the villages*; the Greek version, *with the wealthy*. The Hebrew words for villages and wealthy, though differently spelled, sound not unlike each other.

[2] For "*their* heart" in 17b read "*thy* heart."

[3] Or, nevermore let mortal man bid defiance.

## 12. *The Certainty of Jehovah's Just Vengeance* (94)

Appeal to Jehovah to take vengeance on the oppressor (1-7)

O Jehovah, God of vengeance, appear, O God of vengeance, and avenge. Arise, thou Judge of the earth, and punish the proud. How long, O how long, are the godless to exult with their harsh and blustering words and their lordly bearing, crushing in pieces thine own beloved people, O our God, murdering widows and orphans and strangers, and thinking that Israel's God neither sees nor marks it?

For he who created men can mark and punish their conduct (8-11)

Bethink you, ye fools. Is the creator less discerning than the creatures he has created? Surely he who made the ear and eye cannot himself be either deaf or blind. Surely he who creates[1] can punish, and he who teaches must know. Yes, Jehovah knows that the purposes of such men shall vanish like a breath.[2]

Happy is the man who has learned to await the issue calmly (12-15)

How happy is the man whom thou dost train and teach through the Scriptures to understand thy great purpose; for thus does he keep his soul calm in troublous days, and he can patiently await the sure doom of the wicked. For he knows full well that Jehovah will not forsake the people whom he loves, but that the righteous[3] shall come to their rights again, and win the support of all right-hearted men.

[1] Or trains (so the Hebrew text).

[2] Or sees through the schemes of men; for he is infinite, while they are but a breath. (So Cheyne.)

[3] Or, justice will come to its rights.

Once my plight was very sore. Few there were to take a valiant stand with me against the wicked ; and, but for the help of Jehovah, I had been lying ere this in the silent land. The thought of thy love to me in days gone by ever bears me up, when I seem to myself to be falling. Sometimes I am distracted with doubt, and wonder whether thou couldst be the accomplice of a royal villain who legalized iniquity ; but, when my soul is ruffled with such anxious cares, she is soothed again with the joy of thy consolation. For, though men gather against the innocent and condemn him, I trust for defence to Jehovah, my mighty God. He will make their sin recoil on their own head. He will destroy them, yes, destroy them, for their wickedness.

The singer's perplexity overcome by the thought of the love of God (16-23)

## 13. *The Sure Punishment of the Wicked and Vindication of the Righteous* (37) [1]

Be not fretful or impatient at the success of the wicked ; for the world is ruled by God, and a divine judgment is coming before which the wicked shall wither like grass. Only have confidence in God, and do what is good, and

Envy not the godless, but trust in Jehovah (1-11)

[1] Ps. 37 is an alphabetic psalm. Psalms 37, 49 and 73 are placed together because they all deal very definitely with the same problem. Ps. 37 is the least profound of all, asserting that character is recompensed in this world. Ps. 49 sees further : it asserts that the recompense is not all on earth. There is for the righteous the hope of another life (v. 15). Ps. 73 transcends both in asserting not only the glorious fellowship with God hereafter (v. 24) but also the joy and security of fellowship with him here (v. 23).

then thou shalt one day dwell in the land in the enjoyment of peace and plenty.[1] If thy delight is in Jehovah, he shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit to him with confidence the care of thy life, and he will do all that is needful, making the justice of thy cause to shine clear as the noonday sun. In silence and patience commit it all to God, and be not fretful at the prosperity of knaves. Cherish no anger or impatience in thine heart, as that can but lead to further evil; for the judgment is coming—coming very speedily—which will blot out the wicked, and the place where they were wont to be, and it will also bring the humble, who wait upon Jehovah, into possession of the land, within whose borders they shall enjoy prosperity of every kind.

The godless shall be destroyed (12-20)

The godless concocts his cruel plots against the righteous; but the Lord laughs at him, for he knows how the plot will end: he sees the day of judgment that is coming. With all their skill and strength and weapons of war, they seek to compass the ruin of the righteous; but their weapons shall be useless, or useful only to ensure their own doom.[2] A good man's little is better than a bad man's store; for the bad man's might shall be shattered, but the good man is upheld by his God. Over his fortunes he

[1] It is not impossible to take 3b as a command, co-ordinate with 3c, instead of the reward consequent on obeying the command in 3a. So Wellhausen: dwell in the land, act with fidelity.

[2] This view—that the wicked perish by their own wickedness—is profounder than the general teaching of the psalm.

lovingly watches, and he will always have descendants to enter upon his inheritance. In evil times when others are hungry, the good are fed. Yes, the ungodly perish; the enemies of Jehovah shall vanish like smoke, as a brand in the oven.

God's care for the good (21-31)

The ungodly does not return what he borrows; whereas the just man is moved by his pity to liberal gifts. Those that he blesses shall inherit the land, and those that he curses shall be annihilated.[1] Jehovah guides the steps of the man with whose manner of life he is well-pleased. When he stumbles he does not altogether fall, for Jehovah holds his hand. Never once in my long life have I seen the righteous forsaken, or his children forced to beg. Rather he is always generously giving; his children also are a blessing to others. If thou but do what is good and shun what is evil, thou shalt dwell forever in the land; for Jehovah, who loveth justice, never forsaketh his saints. The wicked are doomed to everlasting destruction;[2] their offspring shall be rooted out. But the righteous shall possess the land, and dwell in it for ever and ever in unshaken

[1] As nothing in the immediate context necessitates the reference of this "he" (in v. 22) to Jehovah, Duhm points differently and translates: those who bless him . . . and those who curse him (Cf. Gen. 12 : 3).

[2] V. 28 is twice the length of the others: and just here a verse beginning with the letter *Ayin*—for the psalm is alphabetic—is missing. The above paraphrase, which rests upon the Septuagint, gives us a verse beginning with precisely the letter we require. The emendation of the text, suggested by the Septuagint, is very slight.

prosperity, because the words of his mouth are words of wisdom, and the law of his God is in his heart.

The certainty of retribution (32-40)

The wicked lies in wait for him with murderous intent; but Jehovah will not abandon him, nor let him be condemned in the trial. If thou wait upon Jehovah and keep to his way, he will honor thee by giving thee the land, and thine eyes shall feast on the destruction of the ungodly—and that right speedily. For I have seen the wicked lifting himself proudly,[1] like a cedar of Lebanon; but, when I[2] drew near, behold! he had vanished, leaving not a trace behind. Preserve thine integrity and practise uprightness, for the future[3] belongs to the man of peace. But future there is none for the wicked; they are destroyed, root and branch. The righteous are saved by Jehovah; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. Because they put their trust in him, he helps and saves them from the ungodly.

### 14. *The Brief Triumph of the Wicked* (49)

Prologue to the riddle (1-4)

The riddle that has troubled me concerns all the world. Listen, then, all of you—high and low, rich and poor—when I talk of it; for I shall speak as a wise man who has meditated deeply thereon, and the answer that has come to me I will proclaim to the sound of the cithern.

[1] The meaning of the word in v. 35b rendered "spreading himself" is disputed.

[2] *I* (not *he*) passed by (v. 36); so the Septuagint.

[3] Or more literally "posterity."

Here is the riddle : I must look on[1] and suffer in silence from the cunning and wickedness that I see on all sides of me—men trusting in their wealth, and boasting of their vast riches. The riddle (5, 6)

But here is the answer. Not one can save himself from death, by giving God a ransom; for the ransom of the soul is too costly, and the man must leave life forever. Yes, he shall assuredly see the grave. For the fools, despite their worldly wisdom,[2] perish, and leave their wealth to others. The grave is their eternal home, even though they have called whole countries their own. The man of pomp abides not therein : like the beast he perishes.[3] This is the fate of all who are foolishly confident and boast of their wealth.[4] Death drives them into the grave, as the shepherd his sheep, and down they go;[5] and soon their image fades away in the grave which is their home. The answer: The wicked perish (7-14)

[1] Or perhaps "be afraid," cf. v. 16.

[2] The "wise men" of v. 10 are apparently the worldly wise. The psalmist is considering such a case as that of the wealthy fool in the parable, who thought he was wise.

[3] Note the refrain (v. 20). Possibly, following the text of v. 20, we should translate : "the man of pomp, who is void of sense, is like the beasts that perish."

[4] The meaning of 13b is exceedingly obscure.

[5] The text of v. 14c reads, "and the upright ruled over them in the morning," which makes little sense. Cheyne transposes clauses c and d, and translates : "Sheol shall be their castle forever, and the upright shall trample upon them in the morning." The translation "down they go straight" rests on Klostermann's ingenious emendation.

The destiny of the good (15)

But God[1] himself shall redeem my soul from the hand of the grave. Yes, he shall take me to himself.[2]

The destiny of the wicked is fitted to confirm faith in the moral order (16-20)

So the sight of the rich man with his vast wealth need not make thee afraid; for not a fragment of it all can he take with him when he dies, nor can his wealth go down after him into the grave; for though he deemed himself happy in his lifetime and was praised for his good fortune, yet in the end he must dwell with his fathers in their home of everlasting darkness. The man of pomp abides not therein: like the beast he perishes.

## 15. *The Fellowship which the Good enjoy with God* (73)

The riddle: the prosperity of the wicked (1-12)

After the long anguish of doubt and misgiving, I am now persuaded that God is good to Israel—at least to the "Israel indeed."

For long my faith that God ruled justly, came very near to tottering. For I was indignant, when I saw how well the godless braggarts fare. They know no pain, they enjoy sound health.[3] They are strangers to the toil

[1] Not money (vv. 6-8).

[2] Or, from the hand of the grave *when it grasps me*. Grammatically this is possible, but in such a context the other is better. "To take" is the technical expression for the taking by God of a good man after death: cf. Ps. 73 : 24. The famous illustrations in the historical books are in Gen. 5 : 24, 2 Kings 2 : 9, 10, passages which indicate how high and rare a dignity is implied by the word.

[3] Instead of "for there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm," the meaning should probably be, "for they have no pains, their body is healthy (or sound) and firm (fat, well fed)." The word for "to their

and afflictions of other men. Hence they become haughty and violent, with their bloated sensuous eyes[1] and their riotous thoughts and fancies. They jeer and indulge in wicked talk, discussing immorality in their lofty way. They rail against everything in heaven and earth. Crowds of like-minded men flock to them, fancying them to be noble fellows.[2] "What should the most high God know about it," they say. Why, look at them! Godless as they are, they are always happy, heaping higher their pile.

The psalmist's perplexity (13-16)

Ah! surely, thought I, it is for nothing that I have kept my heart and hands unspotted from the world, for the morning of each new day brought me some fresh stroke of chastisement. But for me to speak thus would have been treachery to the Jewish faith. So then I sought to study it afresh, but a wearisome task it seemed.

The solution of the riddle: the destruction of the prosperous wicked (17-22)

But in the house of God[3] one day it flashed upon me, as I thought upon their future. For they cannot keep their feet: down to destruction[4] thou hurlest them—in a moment they are clean gone—swept away by terrors,

death" is emended, with high probability, to read "to them sound is . . . (their body)."

[1] V. 7, E. G. King renders "their iniquity goes forth in grossness." The words for "eye" and "iniquity" are much alike in Hebrew. Cheyne: "From an unfeeling heart their iniquity comes forth." So Baethgen.

[2] Baethgen thinks 10b means, "who drink in their ruinous teaching."

[3] V. 17. Many take this verse to mean: I penetrated into *the secrets of* God instead of *the sanctuaries of* God. But this would be against the common usage of the words.

[4] Or disappointment.

despised as a dream that has haunted a man is despised, when he wakes. It was foolish, then, of me to be provoked by the success of the wicked. When the perplexities of life goaded my heart into bitter indignation, I was stupid in thy sight as a beast, that sees nothing but what is before its eyes.

The good man's unbroken fellowship with God (23-28)

But as for me, I am continually with thee. With my right hand in thine, thou dost guide me across the journey of life in the way thou wouldst have me to go;[1] and when the journey is over, thou wilt receive me to glory. If I have but thee, there is nothing in heaven or on earth that I long for. And no power can rob me of thee, for though my body waste away,[2] thou art my portion forever. It is not so with those who are faithless: they stray from thee and perish. But as for me, my happiness lies in being close to my God: in him, who is my Lord, my confidence is fixed immovably.[3]

## III

### REFLECTIONS UPON DIVINE PROVIDENCE

#### 1. *Jehovah's Omniscience and Omnipresence* (139)

Jehovah perfectly knows a man's outward life and inward thought (1-6)

O my God, thou hast searched me, and my life, both within and without, thou knowest altogether—when I sit

[1] Vv. 23, 24, in contrast to the wicked, who cannot keep their feet.

[2] In life; or, more probably, after death.

[3] To clause 28c "that I may declare all thy works," the Greek version adds yet another clause, "in the gates of the daughter of Zion."

down, and when I rise, and what I think, and what I say, and where I go. I cannot escape thee, for thou art about me, behind and before, and thy hand holds me firmly. I cannot understand it ; it is too marvellous for me.

Jehovah is everywhere (7-12)

I cannot go where thou art not. Were I to climb the heavens, thou art there ; were I to lay me in the underworld, behold ! there thou art also. Were I to speed with all swiftness from east to the distant west, even there would thy hand grasp me and lead me. Were I to say, "Surely darkness shall cover me, and the light be night about me," the darkness would not be too dark for thee, and the night would be bright as day.

He is the creator and sustainer of all human life (13-18)

I praise thee, because thou[1] hast shown thyself to be so wondrous and awful. Thy works are marvellous. Soul and body—thou knowest me altogether, and hast known me from the days when I was fashioned and wrought in the dark and secret place of the womb. Thou didst see the tangled skein of my days, thou didst fashion them and write them in thy book,[2] ere any of them was mine. O how much thou hast to care for ! innumerable is the sum

[1] The Greek version here has the second person : literally, *thou* hast been made fearfully wondrous.

[2] So Duhm. V. 16 is very difficult. Baethgen transposes clauses 2 and 3, and translates : "Days were fashioned, they are all written in thy book." Wellhausen, assuming that something has been lost, and that 16a belongs to 15, translates the whole verse thus : "While I was yet unformed, thine eyes saw me.—Thus are all men known to thee, and in thy book they are all recorded : even before they are fashioned, not one among them escapes thee."

of thy thoughts—more than the sand upon the shore. I fall asleep thinking of the wonder of it all: and, when I awake, I am thinking of it still.

May those who have the heart to resist such a God be destroyed (19-22)

O how canst thou tolerate the bloodthirsty, godless men? O that thou wouldst slay them, and remove them out of my sight; for they are nothing but spiteful rebels and blasphemers. Thine enemies are mine. I loathe them; I hate them utterly.

Prayer for leading (23, 24)

Search me, O God, and examine the thoughts of my heart, and see if there be any such folly in me. Take me thyself by the hand, and lead me in the way everlasting.

### 2. *The Joy of Fellowship with God* (16)

The joy of fellowship with God and his people (1-3)

With quiet confidence I commit myself, O God, to thy keeping. O God of Israel, I claim thee as my Lord.[1] I have no happiness apart from thee and thy people.[2] In them is all my joy. Thou art the true God, and I will worship none but thee.

Idolatry a horror (4, 5)

As for the false gods,[3] which some of my countrymen

[1] V. 2. A. V. "O my soul" (for which there is no warrant) "thou hast said," should simply be, "I said."

[2] V. 3 is very difficult; the simplest solution seems to be to regard 3a as a gloss on 3b; the word "glorious ones" may have been felt to stand in need of explanation; and on this view, it is explained by the word "saints" or holy ones.

[3] V. 4. The Hebrew words for "idols" and "pains" are very similar: the context makes the former meaning much the more probable.

honor,[1] I will take no part in their bloody worship,[2] nor even take their name upon my lips. My God is my portion and my lot continually.

The confidence, security, and happiness of Jehovah's true worshippers (6-11)

Jehovah has indeed been very good to me. He has not only given me himself, but he has cast my lot in pleasant places, and given me a delightsome inheritance. I will bless him for guiding me by his counsel, as I meditate in the stillness of the night, keeping him continually before my eyes. All is well because he is at my right hand to protect me. Therefore with confidence and gladness in my heart I look forward to all that can betide: for thou wilt not abandon those who love thee [3] to the gaping jaws of death;[4] but the way that leadeth to life thou wilt show me. Where shines the light of thy gracious face, there is gladness complete; and in thy hand thou holdest pleasures [5] which thou art evermore ready to bestow.

[1] This is no doubt the general sense, but the detail is very obscure. Wellhausen translates: In these, their idols, let others find pleasure. Duhm: As for those whose images are many (or multiplied in the land), those which other (Jews) praise.

[2] Either, child sacrifice, with concomitant drink offering (Is. 57 : 5 f.; 65 : 11), or perhaps simply the slaughter of animals in a forbidden cult, which was as bad as murder (Is. 66 : 3).

[3] One Hebrew tradition reads this word (v. 10) in the plural. Even if the singular be read, however, it may still represent the plural. The decision of the question will partly depend on whether the speaker in the psalm is regarded as an individual or the church.

[4] 10b: not "corruption," but "the pit," corresponding to Sheol or the underworld in 10a.

[5] In both the material and spiritual sense.

### 3. *The Need of Divine Help* (127 : 1, 2)

The need and reward of quiet faith in God (1, 2)

Without the help of God, all human toil is vain. Be it the building of a house or the watching of a city, unless Jehovah be there to help and inspire, it is all in vain. Ye must not wear your strength out, as if all depended upon you. It is idle for you to rise so early and to sit down so late to the evening meal, thus eating the bread of sorrow. For the best gifts do not go to the busiest hands. Jehovah bestows his gifts upon those whom he loves, when they rest and are still.

### 4. *Jehovah the Good Shepherd* (23)

God as shepherd (1-4)

Like a good shepherd, my God is always caring for me, so that I lack for nothing. He guides me to sources of renewal and rest, making me lie down in pastures green, and leading me to the waters of quietness. My weary spirit he refreshes : he guides me in paths that are straight, for the glory of his name. Yea, and he can guide me in the darkness as in the light. For, even when I walk in the valley of the deep shadow, I fear no ill ; for thou art with me, to guide and defend me. Thy rod[1] and thy staff are my comfort.

God as host (5, 6)

Thou art, too, my host as well as my shepherd, and at thy hospitable table, I feast without fear, though mine enemies glare in upon me. Thou anointest my head for the banquet, and the gifts of thy table are abundant.

[1] The club with which the wild beasts were beaten off.

Surely goodness and mercy, angels twain, shall follow close after me all my days, and I shall dwell[1] forever in the house of my God.

### 5. *The Serene Confidence of the Godly* (91)

Perfect security in every kind of peril, of the man who puts his trust in Jehovah (1-13)

The man who knows the almighty and the most high God to be his shelter and his home, can sing to him with grateful confidence : " Thou art my refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust."

For he is mighty to deliver from perils of every kind. He can save thee from snare and deadly pestilence: his sheltering wings can safely cover thee. Thou needest not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flieth by day,[2] nor the plague that stalks in the dark,[3] nor the deadly heat of noonday. Ten thousand of the godless may fall about thee, but the evil shall never touch thee; for Jehovah's faithfulness is to thee as a shield of defence. Thou shalt see with thine eyes how the godless are punished; but that is all. For thou thyself art safe; thou hast made the most high God thy refuge and thy home. No evil shall befall thee; no plague shall come near thy tent; for at his bidding, the angels preserve thee wherever thou goest, bearing thee up and keeping thee from stumbling on the

[1] The Hebrew text reads " return," which would be very appropriate, if the psalm were written in exile; but probably the familiar translation correctly represents the original text.

[2] Perhaps the allusion is to sunstroke (cf. 121 : 6).

[3] Possibly regarded as a demon.

stony ways. Over all that is strong and cruel and treacherous thou shalt have the dominion. Reptiles and adders, lions and dragons, shalt thou trample under foot.

Jehovah's vow (14-16)

"All this," saith Jehovah, "I will do for the man who loves me and cares for me. I will deliver and exalt him. When, in his hour of need, he calls me, I will answer and stand by him. I will save him and bring him to honor, and spare him long to see the golden Messianic days."

### 6. *Jehovah the Guardian of his People* (121)

Help comes from Jehovah (1, 2)

Wistfully I lift up mine eyes to the mountains, and ask my heart whence cometh my help. Not from the mountains, my heart makes answer, but from Israel's God, the creator of heaven and earth.

He is the sleepless sentinel (3, 4)

He can preserve as well as create, for he keeps me from stumbling, and watches over me with sleepless care—yea with sleepless and unslumbering care.

Always and everywhere he preserves (5-8)

Surely he is my preserver and defender. No baleful influence shall hurt me by day or night. He will preserve me from evil of every kind. All the day long he keeps me, from morn till even, when I come home, and he will keep me evermore.

### 7. *Jehovah an Unfailing Defence* (125)

The security of those who trust Jehovah (1-3)

They that trust in Jehovah shall be like Mount Zion, immovable forever, encircled and defended by Jehovah, as the encircling hills defend Jerusalem; for he will never

suffer the godless to rule over Israel's holy land, lest Israel should then be tempted to abandon her faith and go over to heathendom.

Grant good fortune, then, to all that are good and true-hearted in Israel; but make those who turn aside to paths of compromise share the fate of the wicked. Peace be upon Israel!

Prayer for success (4, 5)

### 8. *Jehovah's Favor to the Godly* (34)[1]

I will bless and praise Jehovah without ceasing; and the godly are glad when they hear how I boast in him. Come, then, and magnify Jehovah with me, and let us exalt his name together; for he heard me when I sought him and saved me from all that affrighted me. If ye but look[2] to him, your faces shall shine for very joy, and there shall be no blush of shame upon them. Here[3] is one who was crushed; but Jehovah heard his prayer, and brought him safely out of all his distresses; for his unseen victorious hosts[4] evermore encamp round about them that truly worship him. O taste and see that Jeho-

Praise of Jehovah for the deliverance he has wrought (1-10)

[1] Ps. 34 is an alphabetic psalm.

[2] The third person plural is not in place here (v. 5); the second plural imperative is correct. (So the Greek version.) No consonantal change is necessary.

[3] Pointing to himself.

[4] One angel could not encamp round about a company. Either he represents Jehovah himself (cf. Ps. 125 : 2), or is captain of Jehovah's host (cf. Josh. 5 : 14; 2 Kings 6 : 17.)

vah is good. How happy is the man who puts his trust in him! O fear Jehovah, ye that are his saints; for they that fear him lack for nothing. Rebels [1] indeed may be poor and hungry, but not those who seek Jehovah; they lack no good thing.

Jehovah favors the good (13-22)

Come, then, children, and listen while I teach you the secret of religion. If a man desires a long and happy life, he must be true and sincere in speech, devoted to all that is good, and an earnest lover of peace. Jehovah sets his face [2] against the evil-doers, to root out their memory from the earth. But he looks with love upon the righteous; he listens to their cry and brings them safely out of their distress. To the broken-hearted he is near, and he saves those whose spirit is crushed; for, though the troubles of the righteous are many, Jehovah delivers them out of them all, and evermore preserves them from the swift and violent death that overtakes the wicked;[3] but those who hate the righteous shall pay the penalty.[4]

[1] "Apostates," instead of "young lions." This is Duhm's suggestion. The words are very similar.

[2] Vv. 15 and 16 ought to be transposed.

[3] In v. 21, it is not "evil," as in the English version, but "a calamity," "misfortune," that is to slay the wicked.

[4] V. 22—Jehovah redeems his servants, and not one of them who trusts in him shall suffer—is no doubt a liturgical addition, like 25: 22. The previous verse began with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*t*); this verse begins with *p*, whereas *p* is already represented by v. 16.

### 9. *The Blessedness of Jehovah's Followers* (112)[1]

The prosperity and security of those who fear God (1-10)

How happy is the man who acknowledges Jehovah,[2] and finds great pleasure in his law. He shall be blessed and his descendants shall be a power in the land. Wealth and riches are in his house, and the divine blessing abides with him forever. In his darkness light arises, and he, like his God,[3] is full of grace and pity and justice. Happy is the man who lends and gives, and who is just in the management of his affairs.[4] He will enjoy unshaken prosperity and be remembered forever. Evil tidings do not terrify him : for with steadfast heart he trusts Jehovah. His heart is firm and fearless, he knows that one day he will feast his eyes upon his enemies. He gives liberally to the poor, the divine blessing abides with him forever, he is lifted to honor. At the sight the godless man gnashes his teeth with vexation and pines away with disappointed hopes.

### 10. *The Prosperity of Jehovah's People* (144 : 12-15)[5]

The prosperity of Jehovah's people (12-15)

Our sons shall be as plants that are trained, and our daughters like the sculptured figures[6] that adorn the pil-

[1] An alphabetic psalm, companion-piece to 111, which is also alphabetic.

[2] This verse points back to 111 : 10.

[3] Cf. 111 : 4.

[4] Or perhaps, he will maintain his case, that is, will not lose it, at the trial.

[5] These verses have little obvious relation to vv. 1-11, and appear to constitute a fragment by themselves.

[6] For example, Caryatides.

lars of a palace. Our garners shall abound with store of every kind; our sheep will bring forth by the myriad on our pastures, and our cattle will be heavily laden.[1]

Peace and prosperity[2] shall reign in our streets.

O how happy is the people who fare thus well! and thus fares the people whose God is Jehovah.

### 11. *Jehovah the Source of Domestic Joys* (127 : 3-5[3]; 128)

The blessing of children (127 : 3-5)

See! Jehovah bestows upon those who fear him the gift of children, and mighty defenders are the sons who are born to a man in his youth. O how happy is he who has many such! He shall hold up his head with confidence when he faces his enemies.[4]

Jehovah blesses his worshippers with a happy home, and a part in the welfare of Jerusalem (128 : 1-6)

How happy is everyone that fears Jehovah and keeps his commandments! Not another, but thou thyself, shalt eat what thy hands have toiled for: happy and prosperous shalt thou be. In her inner chamber thy wife shall

[1] There are difficulties in the way of the translation "heavy with young." The meaning is obscure, and the words may be a gloss.

[2] This is the general sense, but the detail is very obscure. Wellhausen translates "There is no murder nor manslaughter." Duhm: "No misfortune or loss in our markets."

[3] It is only by a somewhat strained interpretation that any connection can be found between these verses and vv. 1, 2. In any case, they may fairly be taken by themselves.

[4] "When he speaks with his enemies in the gate." That is, either (a) in time of war, or (b) in a legal process, where might often triumphed over right, his sons would defend him.

be fruitful as a vine, and thy children round about thy table like glad young olive-trees. See! such shall be the blessing that Jehovah will dispense from the temple to the man that fears him.

All the days of thy life thou shalt enjoy the good fortune of Jerusalem, and shalt live to see thy children's children. Peace be upon Israel.

### 12. *The Blessedness of Brotherly Concord* (133)[1]

The beauty of brotherly concord (1-3)

What a beautiful sight to see brethren, whose homes are far apart, united and dwelling together again! A sight as welcome[2] as the goodly oil that runs down the high-priest's beard—the beard that flows over the collar of the garment! A sight refreshing as the heavy dew that falls upon the hills of Jerusalem. For within that city is the heavenly blessing—even life that shall never end.

[1] But for the reference to Aaron, one might refer the psalm to the reunion of the members of a family. In its present form, at least, it seems to refer to the festivals which brought the scattered members of the Jewish race together to Jerusalem.

[2] Possibly the point of comparison in v. 2 is that the long lines of the houses of Jerusalem and the tents of the pilgrims, flow down the slopes of the Temple hill, even to the base—like the oil on Aaron's garments (W. Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 212, note).

## IV

### REFLECTIONS ON THE VALUE OF SCRIPTURE

### 1. *Its Mastery the Secret of Success* (1)

The prosperity of the godly (1-3)

The truly happy man is he who never entered on the perilous path of godlessness—that path which begins in dallying with evil, and leads by sure steps to the deliberate scorn of religion. But his heart is set upon the Scriptures, and over them he broods continually. The destiny of such an one is bright—like a tree, fruitful and fair, with roots that are nourished by water from the rivulets, and leaves that never fade.[1] All that he does he brings to a happy issue.

The fate of the ungodly (4-6)

Far other is the destiny of the godless. They are light as the chaff blown about by the wind ; and when the winds of judgment begin to blow, they shall not be able to keep their feet, nor shall they have any place in the assembly of the righteous. For, while Jehovah watches over the way that the righteous takes, the way of the godless vanishes out of sight.

[1] Cf. Jer. 17 : 7, 8, where this is the blessing of the man who trusts Jehovah.

## 2. *The Power of the Law* (19 : 7-14)[1]

The glory and power of the Scriptures (7-11)

The law[2] of Jehovah is spotless. It brings the spirit back to life. Its warnings and promises are sure; and to the simple they impart wisdom. Its statutes are right; they make glad the heart that obeys them. The religion[3] of Jehovah is pure; and, like all that is pure, it abideth forever. What Jehovah enjoins is true and right; more precious are his laws than the finest gold, and sweeter than the choicest honey. By them thy servant[4] is enlightened and warned, and he is richly rewarded when he keeps the same.

Prayer for purity and deliverance (12-14)

Who can trace the sins that he unwittingly commits? Of all such sins declare me guiltless; and preserve me, O my God, from perils without as well as within. Save me from the arrogant, and keep them from lording it over me, thine own people Israel. Then, when the land is rid of their yoke, I shall know that thou hast declared me blameless and free from apostasy.

Be pleased to accept these words and thoughts of mine, O Jehovah, my rock and redeemer.

[1] Even if vv. 1-6 were originally independent, the connection with 7-11 is good: the glory of God in the sky and Scripture, the law of God in nature and revelation.

[2] The synonyms for Scripture here are much the same as in Ps. 119.

[3] The fear of Jehovah, in the objective sense; that is, the religion of Israel.

[4] That is, Israel; this becomes plainer in v. 13.

### 3. *Meditations on the Word of God* (119)[1]

Its precepts promote uprightness (1-8)

Happy are they whose life is blameless—they who earnestly search the Scriptures that they may know and do the will of God, as it is contained therein, and sinlessly walk in his ways. O that I might be steadfast in my walk! then would obedience bring me to the goal. I will render thee my hearty thanks, when I master all thy righteous laws; and O! forsake me not utterly, lest mine obedience be put to shame.[2]

It reveals Jehovah's will (9-16)

Only by a vigilance born of a knowledge of Scripture can a young man keep his life pure. Let me not stray from thy commandments: in them I have earnestly sought thee. Thy word have I hidden as a treasure in my heart, to keep me from sinning against thee. O blessed God! teach me thy will. I rehearse thy commandments with delight, and I love more than riches the way to which they point me. I think upon them with joy and will remember them forever.

[1] An alphabetic psalm, each letter claiming 8 verses. As in the alphabetic psalms generally, there is here very little sequence of thought. Sometimes several verses go naturally together (cf. 81-88), but in the main the meditations are isolated.

[2] Israel was weak and suffering (141-143), and doubtless felt herself at this time forsaken of God. The speaker seems to be Ĭsrael, the community, nation or church, not the individual. Notice that princes take counsel against her (23) and persecute her (161); she is small and despised (141) and almost consumed (87).

Graciously suffer thy servant to live, and I will keep thy word. Open mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy law. I am a stranger on the earth; keep me not then in ignorance of what thou wouldst have me to do.[1] My soul is worn with ceaseless longing for a knowledge of thy will. I know that thy rebuke and curse rest upon the arrogant who care not for thy law; but I have kept it. Roll away then the shame and contempt with which I am burdened. Though foreign princes plot against me, yet I will meditate upon thy law; yea, it is my delight as well as my counsellor.

It comforts in times of persecution (17-24)

My soul is exceeding sorrowful, and I am nigh unto death: revive me according to thy word. When I tell thee of my daily life, thou dost answer me. O teach me thy will, and I will think on thy wonders. Put from me the spirit of apostasy, and teach me graciously, for I have chosen the way of thy truth, and steadily clung to it. O put me not to shame, for with happy heart I would run in the way of thy commandments.[2]

It sustains the heavy of heart (25-32)

Teach me thy will, and I will earnestly do it forever. Guide me in the way of thy commandments, for they are my delight. They can preserve me from covetousness, and from the vain desire of the eyes, if thou do but graciously revive me. Fulfil upon thy servant the promise which is for those that fear thee, and remove the reproach that I

It removes selfishness and folly (33-40)

[1] Stranger should be acquainted with the laws of the land, so as to keep from transgressing them.

[2] Or, by another reading, "thy commandments are the joy of my heart."

dread ; for obedience to thy word deserves not reproach. Revive me in thy mercy, that I may fulfil the commandments that I love.

It imparts courage to meet malicious foes (41-48)

Visit me, O God, with thy grace and thy salvation according to thy promise, that so I may be able to answer my slanderer. In that hour take not out of my mouth the words of truth, which are my hope and confidence. So shall I keep thy law for evermore, and walk at liberty. Even before heathen princes, in the land of our dispersion, I will speak of thy law without shame—the law that I love and all but worship,[1] the law in which I meditate.

It gives comfort in sore affliction (49-56)

Remember thy promise to thy servant, for thou hast bidden me hope. This is my comfort in mine affliction that thy words preserve me in life. Despite the fierce mockery of the arrogant, I have not swerved from thine ancient law, and it comforted me when I thought thereon. Glowing indignation seizes me, when I think of the wicked who forsake it. It is so dear to me. I sing its praises in the house of my pilgrimage,[2] and muse on thy name in the night, O my God, and thou dost graciously enable me to keep thy law.

It attracts the godly-minded (57-64)

My portion is Jehovah : I keep thy law.[3] Earnestly do I entreat thee to revive[4] me according to thy promise.

[1] Hands were raised to God in prayer : cf. 28 : 2.

[2] That is, the earth : cf. v. 19.

[3] Or, "my portion is to keep thy words, O Jehovah."

[4] So Syriac. The Hebrew reads, "be gracious to me."

When I think upon my ways, I speedily turn my feet in the direction of thy commandments; and though I am caught as in a net by the snares of the godless, I do not forget thy law. At midnight I rise to praise thee for thy righteous precepts. I have fellowship with all who fear thee and keep thy commandments. The earth is full of thy love, O my God. Teach me thy statutes.

It promotes steadiness and joy (65-72)

Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, according to thy promise. Teach me judgment and knowledge: for I lean upon thy laws. Before affliction came, I was a wanderer, but now I keep thy word. Good thou art, and thou doest good: teach me thy law. The arrogant forge lies against me with unfeeling heart; but, as for me, I keep thy commandments with a heart that is earnest and joyful. Affliction was good for me; for it brought me to learn thy will. Thy law is better for me than treasures untold.

It gives delight and comfort (73-80)

As thou hast created my body, create for me also the mind to learn thy commandments. Those who worship thee will be glad when they see how my patient confidence in thee has been crowned. I know that thy judgments are just, and that mine affliction is a proof of thy faithfulness. May thy love be my consolation, according as thou hast promised to thy servant. Have pity upon me, that I may live; for thy law is my delight. May the arrogant be brought to shame, for they wrongfully oppress me; but, as for me, I meditate on thy command-

ments. May all turn to me who fear thee and know thy law. May my heart keep thy precepts blamelessly, that disgrace may never be mine.

It is a solace to the persecuted (81-88)

I pine for thy help, I wait for thy word. I look with longing for thy promise, and say to myself, "When wilt thou comfort me?" Though I am worn and shrivelled like a wineskin in the smoke, yet have I not forgotten thy commandments. Since my days are so few, speedily execute judgment upon my persecutors. A pit has been dug for me by unbelieving and arrogant men. O save me according to thy faithful promises. Though they all but consumed me, yet did I not forsake thy commandments. I will keep them, if thou but in thy mercy revive me.

It is eternally true (89-96)

Thy word, O Jehovah, is eternal as the heavens; it is because of thy faithfulness that the earth and all things continue throughout the generations: they are all thy servants.[1] But for the joy that thy law brought me, I should have perished in my misery. Never shall I forget thy commandments, for through them thou hast revived me. Thine I am, save me, for I am studious of thy law. The godless lie in wait to destroy me; but I give heed to thy

[1] For "thy faithfulness" in v. 90, Duhm reads "thy word." For "this day" in v. 91, Wellhausen reads "all beings." The words are not unlike in the Hebrew. Duhm believes that these two verses do little more than reassert the thought of v. 89—the eternity of the divine word. The verses, as they stand in the ext, contain noble thought: but the text cannot be said to be certain.

precepts. All earthly perfection is finite, but thy law is infinite.

O how I love thy law; I think of it continually. It makes me wiser than my foreign foes,[1] who would teach me another faith—wiser, too, than the aged. It keeps my feet unerringly in thine own way, far from the paths of sin. Thou thyself [2] art my teacher. Sweeter than honey are thy words: they bring me wisdom and teach me to hate every false way.[3]

It is precious and inspiring to those who study it (97-104)

Thy word sheds light upon the way that I should go. I will keep the vow that I have sworn, to observe it all. I am sore afflicted; revive me according to thy promise. Be pleased to accept the thanks I utter, and teach me thine ordinances. Though I am in continual peril, yet have I not forgotten thy law. The godless sought to trip me up; yet I strayed not from thy law. It is mine eternal inheritance, and the joy of my heart, and I have inclined my heart to perform it forever.

It directs the pathway of the believer (105-112)

I hate the sceptically minded,[4] but thy law I love. My shelter and shield art thou: I wait for thy word. Get ye gone, ye evil-doers,[5] and let me keep the commandments

It defends him from skepticism and disobedience (113-120)

[1] If the psalms belong, as many suppose, to the second century B. C., the reference here will be to the Greeks, and, in general, to the influences that made for a liberal and worldly culture.

[2] In contrast to the alien teachers of v. 98.

[3] That is, false religion, such as that introduced by Greek influence.

[4] V. 113, half Jewish, half Greek. Cf. 1 Kings 18 : 21.

[5] From Ps. 6 : 8a.

of my God. Sustain me according to thy promise, that I may live, and that my hope may not be put to shame. Hold me up and save me, and I shall ever look up to thy law. Those who have wandered therefrom in the falseness of their heart,[1] thou hast utterly cast off, counting them as dross. In fear of such a fate, I cling to thy law, for I am sore afraid of thee and thy judgments.

The man who keeps it Jehovah will love and protect (121-128)

I have done thy will; leave me not to mine oppressors, and pledge thy word[2] that they shall not triumph over me. With longing eyes I look for thy help in fulfilment of thy righteous promise. Deal with me in mercy and graciously instruct thy servant in thy law. It is time for thee to execute thy work of judgment, for they have broken thy law. More than fine gold do I love thy commandments, and I walk according to all thy precepts,[3] detesting every false way.

It explains the mysteries of life (129-136)

Thy law is wonderful, therefore I obey it. The revelation of thy word gives light and wisdom to the simple. With open mouth I pant and pine for thy commandments. Graciously turn to me, as is just to the friends of thy name. Through thy word make my steps firm, that

[1] So the Greek version, which reads "their thought is falsehood" for "their deceit is falsehood."

[2] As v. 122 is the only verse in the psalm without a reference to the word of God, Duhm emends "thy servant" to "thy word"—a fairly simple and probable change.

[3] "All precepts concerning all things" should simply be "all thy precepts."

sin may have no power over me. Redeem me from oppression, and I will keep thy commandments. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes. My face streams with tears, because thy law is not observed.

Its precepts are eternally right (137-144)

Righteous art thou, O my God, and right are the laws thou hast enjoined. Thy precepts are just and true exceedingly. I am consumed by my zeal, because my foes have forgotten thy words. Thy word is exceeding pure, and thy servant loves it. Little am I and held in contempt, but, unlike my foes,[1] I remember thy commandments. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is truth. Despite the distress that has come upon me, thy commandments are my delight. They are right forever: instruct me in them, that I may live.

To the eager student Jehovah draweth nigh (145-152)

With all my heart I call to thee for help; hear me, O my God, and I will keep thy statutes. In the early dawn I cry, waiting for thy word; I awake before the night-watch begins, to meditate therein. Mercifully hear my voice, and revive me according to thy law. Men draw near to me who persecute me wrongfully, and stand aloof from thy law, but thou, too, art near me, O my God, and thy commandments are truth. From the days of old I have known that thou hast established them to abide forever.

[1] V. 139.

Its essence is truth (153-160)

Look upon mine affliction, and deliver me, for I have not forgotten thy law. Defend my cause and redeem me, and revive me according to thy promise. The wicked are far from salvation, for they study not thy commandments. Great is thy pity, O my God, revive me according to thy justice. Though the foes who persecute me are many, yet I have not swerved from thy laws. When I see the apostates, I loathe them, because they do not keep thy word; but see how I love it, and in thy mercy revive me. The essence of thy word is truth, and thine ordinances are just and eternal.

It brings peace and happiness to him who observes it (161-168)

Though princes have persecuted me without a cause, as for me, I fear thy word and rejoice in it, as one that finds great spoil. The false religion I hate and abhor, but thy law I love; and I praise thee for it seven times a day. Those who love it enjoy a peace[1] that is deep, and move on their way without stumbling. I hope for thy help, O my God, for I have kept thy commandments, and I love them exceedingly. Thou knowest all my ways.

It deserves unending praise (169-176)

Listen to my loud supplication, O my God; revive[2] and save me according to thy promise. My lips shall utter their praise of the just laws that thou teachest me. Help and save me by thy mighty hand; for thy gracious law has been my choice. Through it be pleased to help and spare me, and thou shalt have my praise. If I stray like

[1] Obviously inner peace, for the psalmist has enemies (v. 161).

[2] Perhaps this is better in the context than "instruct me." So Syriac.

a lost sheep, O seek me, for thy servant doth not forget thy commandments.

## V

### REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE OF THE IDEAL MAN

#### 1. *The True Citizen of Zion* (15)[1]

Qualities of the ideal citizen of Zion (1-5)

What man can count on the divine protection? Who is the true citizen of the holy city? Not he whose home is in Jerusalem, but he whose life is worthy. His walk must be pure, and his conduct right and sincere; neither in deed nor yet in word will he wrong his neighbor. He must despise reprobates, and honor all true worshippers of Jehovah. He will keep his word, though he suffer for it. He will lend without interest, and he will gain no unholy gain at the expense of the innocent. One whose life is such as this will enjoy prosperity unshaken.

#### 2. *The True Worshipper* (24 : 1-6)

The majesty of Israel's God (1, 2)

The God of Israel is the glorious Lord of all the earth; to him all men and all things upon it belong. For it was he who created it, establishing it, upon ocean's streams, and it is he who sustains it thereon.

Who then is worthy to approach this glorious God in worship? None but one who is pure of heart, as well as

[1] Cf. Isaiah 33 : 14, 15.

The conditions of access to his sanctuary (3-6)

blameless in deed, who never set his heart on things of nought.[1] Such an one shall be vindicated and blessed by the God who is his Saviour, and the blessing shall pertain to all who inquire after Israel's God,[2] and seek his presence.

### 3. *The Essence of True Worship* (50)

Jehovah comes in glory to reprove his people (1-6)

The great God of Israel appears in ancient splendor to admonish his people. He utters his voice, and the earth trembles [3] from east to west. From Zion fair, the hill of peerless beauty, his glory flashes forth [4]—fire before him and storm around him. He summons the heavens above and the earth beneath to the trial of his people. Bestir you, then, ye rulers, and gather together his[5] saints who are bound to him by a covenant of sacrifice; and let the onlooking heavens declare that his judgment is just.

God can dispense with material sacrifices (7-15)

"Listen," saith Jehovah, "O Israel, my people, to my

[1] V. 4c "and never swore deceitfully," is a gloss, due to a misunderstanding of the previous clause, which was once supposed to read, "never took *my* soul in vain," where "my soul" was unwarrantably interpreted as equivalent to "my name" (Ex. 20 : 7).

[2] The Hebrew simply has, "that seek thy face, even Jacob," that is, the true Israel. But for "Jacob," we must, with the versions, read, "the God of Jacob."

[3] "Feared," for "he summoned," by a slight change in the text. The earth is not summoned till v. 4.

[4] "May he really come" (not merely in imagination) "and not be silent:" regarded by some as the sigh of an ancient reader (v. 3).

[5] Instead of "my." So the Septuagint.

words of complaint. I am Jehovah thy God,[1] and the service I demand is not exhausted by sacrifice;[2] on that ground I cannot reproach you; for sacrifice ye offer without ceasing. But of such things I have no need—of tame beasts from house or stall, nor of the wild beasts in forest or on hill, for they are all mine—the birds of the sky,[3] and the creatures of the field. The whole world is mine with all that is in it; so that were I hungry, I could take what I would without telling thee: but I eat not the flesh of beasts nor do I drink their blood. But when thou dost offer thy thanksgiving[4] in payment of thy vow, let there be real prayer and gratitude; then in time of distress I will deliver thee and thou shalt pay me honor.

But what right have you[5] to talk of my commandments and prate glibly of my law, when all the while you reject its warnings and cast my words behind your back? You enjoy the company of thieves and adulterers. You indulge

Animal sacrifices will not cover breaches of the moral law (16-20)

[1] The preface to the decalogue, Ex. 20 : 2.

[2] Or "does not consist in sacrifice." The precise attitude of the psalm to sacrifice is extremely difficult to determine; but the meaning assigned in the paraphrase is true at least.

[3] So the Septuagint.

[4] Some take the reference here to be to the gratitude itself, not to the material offering. "Offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving." That is, no doubt, of more account than the offering; but the material offering seems to be hinted at here, and is not in itself objectionable (cf. v. 8).

[5] "To the wicked God saith." Probably this ought not to be regarded as a new address. It is the same people who are fond of sacrifices and neglect the moral law.

in cruel and malicious gossip, deliberately slandering your own very brother[1] among your evil associates. And because I was silent all the while, you thought I was like yourselves, willing to connive at sin, if only there was sacrifice.

The destiny of the wicked and the good (21-23)

Nay, verily, I will punish you, and show you plainly the truth of the case. Mark it well, ye that forget God, lest like a lion he rend you in pieces; he who offers a thank-offering does me honor, but he who giveth heed to his ways shall enjoy my full salvation."

[1] Cheyne regards the brother as any fellow-Israelite.

# THE PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING

# THE PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING

## I

### INTRODUCTION

Very few singers of the Old Testament would have understood the apostolic injunctions to give thanks in everything and to rejoice evermore. It is a rare thing to hear one vow that he will rejoice in Jehovah and joy in the God of his salvation, though the fig-tree yield no blossom, and there be no herd in the stalls (Hab. 3: 17, 18). Yet the Hebrew religion was, in the main, glad and grateful, and when it did give thanks, it did so with good will. There was much in the common round of every year, with the recurrence of its seasons of seed-time and harvest, to make the Hebrew heart glad; and its gladness took on the color of religion. At times, too, there were droughts which blighted the land and dried up the hope and enthusiasm of the people; and when such times were followed by showers from the bountiful river of God, which watered the furrows and softened the ridges (65 : 9, 10; 67 : 6), they expressed their gratitude in noble songs of thanksgiving.

The grounds of gratitude to Jehovah are manifold: but they are all summed up in a phrase which is echoed more than once: he brings men out of their straits into a broad place, where there is opportunity to breathe and room to move (18:19; 66:12; 118:5). The one hundred and seventh psalm, with its glad refrain, furnishes types of the distress out of which God delivers men: he guides the caravans that travel across the trackless desert, he releases the prisoners, he heals the sick, and brings the storm-tossed seamen to the haven where they would be.

But the highest, or at least, the most frequent motives of gratitude are drawn from history. It is unfortunate that there are whole periods of which we know little or nothing; it is unfortunate, too, that we have no means of fixing with precision the period to which any given psalm belongs. The deliverance of Judah from Sennacherib in 701 B. C., the return from the exile, the reformation inaugurated under Ezra and Nehemiah, the triumph of the Maccabees—these incidents were all great enough to touch poetic hearts to song, and no doubt there are memorials of them in the Psalter, if we could only be sure where to find them. It is possible, for example, that Psalm 46 is the song of triumph over the retreat of Sennacherib, Psalm 40: 1-11 the song of joy to celebrate the deliverance from exile, Psalm 30 the song to celebrate the dedication of the temple in 165 B. C. after its cruel profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes. But whether these conjectures

be just or not, there can be no doubt that many of the psalms of thanksgiving are associated with definite and important historical events. The enemy is often indeed described in general terms, but sometimes also very graphically, as foaming and blustering like the waves of the sea (46) or as swarming round Israel like bees (118 : 12). But Israel's God is a war-god (24 : 8, 10), and mightier than all they that can be against him. As, according to the myth, he vanquished the mighty monsters of primeval times (74 : 14 ; 89 : 10), so in historical times he often crushed the powerful opposition of Israel's enemies, breaking the bow, shivering the spear, throwing the enemy into a mysterious trance (76 : 5), and thus defending his people, and saving his holy city (46 : 4 ; 76 : 2). Such a context is often represented as a trial, in which Jehovah, as judge, gives the case to Israel (cf. 9). Sometimes a spirit of vengeance breathes through the song of gratitude, as in Psalm 149, where in the mouth of "the godly" is a song of praise, and a two-edged sword in their hand to execute vengeance (149 : 6, 7) ; and we are reminded how far we still are, even in the later portions of the Old Testament, from him whose kingdom was not of this world.

There was power manifested in these historical deliverances ; and Israel, in her songs, is fond of answering the heathen taunt, "Where is thy God"? (42 : 3) with the proud challenge, "Come and see" (46 : 8 ; 66 : 5). There is

no mistaking what Jehovah has done. But dearer to Israel than the power was the divine love displayed in these national triumphs. Over and over again in the Psalter is heard the refrain, " His love is everlasting " (cf. 107, 136). Jehovah's was a love that had proved itself upon the field of history ; and it was not as the dupes of a pious imagination, but with solid fact beneath their feet that they met —priests, people and proselytes (115 : 9-11 ; 118 : 2-4)— in the temple courts (118 : 27), to sing their songs of praise, to offer their drink offering (116 : 13) and to pay their vows of sacrifice (66 : 15). The God of Israel was the omnipotent creator and protector (124 : 8) ; well might they rejoice beneath the shadow of his wings (63 : 7).

## II

### A GENERAL THANKSGIVING (107)

Thanks to Jehovah for redemption and restoration (1-3)

Praise ye Jehovah. Give thanks to him, for he is good ; his love is everlasting. Let this be the song of those whom Jehovah has redeemed from distress, and gathered home from the ends of the earth.

(a) The guidance of the caravan lost in the wilderness (4-9)

From all kinds of distress Jehovah can deliver men. There were those who wandered up and down the desert, faint and hungry and thirsty, and unable to find their way to any city.

But when in their distress they cried to Jehovah, he
delivered them and brought them straight to the
city.
O let them give thanks to Jehovah for his love, and
for the wonders which he works for men; for the
languishing and the hungry he satisfies.

(b) The release of the prisoners (10-16)

Unhappy prisoners there were, too, who, for their sins lay in chains of misery in the darkness of the dungeon, with hearts bowed down, and none to help them when they stumbled.

But when in their distress they cried to Jehovah,
he delivered them and burst their bands, and
brought them out of the dungeon's darkness.
O let them give thanks to Jehovah for his love, and
for the wonders which he works for men; for he
has shivered the gates of bronze, and the bars of
iron he has cut in sunder.

(c) The restoration from sickness (17-22)

There were others again whose sin had led to suffering and sickness so grievous that they loathed the sight of food and were at the very point of death.

But when in their distress they cried to Jehovah, he
delivered them, sending forth his healing word like
an angel, and bringing back their life from the grave.
O let them give thanks to Jehovah for his love, and
for the wonders which he works for men. Let
them offer the sacrifice of gratitude and tell with
joy the story of his doings.

(d) The saving of the travellers by sea (23-32)

There were others, too, merchants, who travelled on the great sea, and saw in its waters the marvellous things that Jehovah had created. But at a word of his, a storm arose, which lifted high the billows. Up they went to the sky and down again to the depths. Their heart melted in their misery. They reeled and staggered and lost their wits like men that were drunk.

But when in their distress they cried to Jehovah, he delivered them. He hushed the storm, and the waves were still. Then they were glad when the sea was quiet, and he guided them safely to the harbor where they longed to be.

O let them give thanks to Jehovah for his love and for the wonders which he works for men. Let them exalt and praise him among the people, and where the elders meet together.[1]

Jehovah's goodness to Israel (33-42)

But Jehovah will do for his people yet greater wonders than these. As he turns a land of fruitfulness and streams into a thirsty desert, because of the sin of her people, so again he turns the parched desert into a well-watered land, where he settles the hungry and they found a city and sow and plant and reap a harvest, and prosper and multiply—themselves and their cattle. And though under stress of misfortune and sorrow they be few and fallen, yet Jehovah will bring to shame the proud ty-

[1] If "elders" is not here used in the technical sense, this will mean simply "among gatherings of old people."

rants that crush them, and cause them to wander aimlessly about, like travellers in a trackless desolation.[1] But needy Israel he will lift up out of her misery and make her families like a flock of sheep. Then, in those golden, Messianic days, the upright shall rejoice and their cunning enemies shall be dumb.

The wise man will think of those things, and lay to heart Jehovah's abounding love.

## III

### THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE [FROM SENNACHERIB?] [2]

### 1. *The Security of Jehovah's Own City* (46)

Our God is our refuge and strength, who graciously and abundantly helps in time of distress. Therefore we will not fear in the direst confusion; no! not though the earth should change her place, and the mountains totter into the sea. Though the waters rage and foam, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Confidence amid confusion (1-3)

[1] V. 40a = Job 12 : 21a, and v. 40b = Job 12 : 24b.

[2] Psalms 46, 48 and 76 are grouped together, because they seem to celebrate the same deliverance, though it is possible that 76 is later, and modelled on the other two. Some of course refer these psalms to other deliverances; some even interpret 46 eschatologically, regarding Zion as the ideal Zion of the latter days.

Confidence amidst assault (4-7)

Jehovah of hosts is with us; a fortress sure is the God of Jacob.[1]

Despite the assaults of the angry sea, the city of God is gladdened by the gentle river of his grace—the city which he has saved and hallowed. Because he dwells in the midst of her, she can never totter. The dark night is sure to pass; and God helps her at the turning of the morning. Confusion reigned throughout the world: nations raged and kingdoms reeled: earth melted before Jehovah's angry voice.

But Jehovah of hosts is with us; a fortress sure is the God of Jacob.

Confidence in Israel's omnipotent God (8-11)

Come and see what he has done—the dreadful work which proves his might. This Lord of hosts has stilled the battle-strife across the world, breaking the bow, and snapping the spear, and burning the shields[2] in the fire. What folly then to fight with such an one! "Cease your foolish warfare," he triumphantly cries to the foe, "learn that I am Jehovah, Israel's God, to be exalted the wide world over."

Well may Israel, encouraged by the sight of Jehovah's omnipotence, utter this song more loudly than ever:

"Jehovah of hosts is with us; a fortress sure is the God of Jacob."

[1] It is fairly probable that the refrain (cf. vv. 7, 11) should be inserted here.

[2] So Septuagint.

## 2. *The Deliverance of Zion* (48)

Zion the fair has been the scene of a divine manifestation (1-3)

Our God is a great God, and worthy of all praise in the city of Jerusalem and on Zion's holy hill. Fair she rises, as a mountain of the gods in the distant north [1]—Mount Zion, the city of the Great King, the joy of all the earth. God has revealed himself in her by preserving her palaces from peril.

The city was unharmed by the foe (4-8)

For, see! kings gathered and came on together; but one glance at the city was enough. No sooner did they see it than they hasted away in astonishment, confusion, and terror, like a woman in travail—shattered as the east wind shatters the giant ships. The present is not less wondrous than the past.[2] The tales of the olden time have been matched by what we have seen with our own eyes in this city of our mighty God, Jehovah of hosts, the city which he will preserve forever.

Jehovah is praised for his mercy in preserving the city—a mercy which is undeniable and everlasting (9-14)

Assembled as we are in the temple, we call to mind thy goodness to us in this great deliverance. Thy name is known and thy praise is sung throughout the length and breadth of the world; for just and mighty art thou. Let Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah rejoice because of thy just judgments. For who can deny that Jehovah has saved

[1] Or, with Duhm, we may suppose that the poet himself lived in the south, say in Upper Egypt; and that from this point, he looks on Jerusalem as a sort of oriental Olympus.

[2] Or, if the psalm be written by a pilgrim, the meaning will be that the city is as great as the rumors of it had led him to expect.

Jerusalem? Walk round about the city and count her towers—not one of them is missing. Her walls have not been battered, nor her palaces been touched. Lay this up in your heart and tell it to your children, that this is the work of Jehovah our God, and with the same omnipotent love he will guide us for ever and ever.[1]

### 3. *Jehovah's Victory at Jerusalem* (76)

Jehovah saved Jerusalem (1-3)

Our God hath revealed himself and his glory in Judah. In Jerusalem, her capital city, which is his home, he showed himself the victor, shivering in pieces the lightning arrows, the shield, and spear, and weapons of war.

The rout of the foe (4-6)

When thou didst appear in thine awful splendor upon the everlasting mountains that are round about Jerusalem, the foe, strong of limb and stout of heart, fell into a trance,[2] lost the power of their hands and became our prey. A stern word from thee, O God of Israel, threw horsemen and charioteers into a deep sleep.

The divine judgment (7-9)

Awful art thou; none can stand before thy fierce anger. Thy voice of judgment from heaven affrighted into silence the people that had assailed thy poor servants whom thou didst rise to save.

Grateful homage to Israel's mighty God (10-12)

Every tribe will praise thee; all men will celebrate sa-

[1] Not "unto death." The words so rendered, are probably in reality part of the musical superscription to the following psalm.

[2] More weird and probable in this context than the sleep of death.

cred festivals in thine honor.[1] For this deliverance let Israel gratefully pay her vows to Jehovah her God, and let the neighboring peoples bring presents to the dread majesty of him who can slay princes and fill kings with terror.

## IV

### THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE [FROM THE EXILE?][2]

### 1. *Jehovah's Signal Deliverance* (124)

Had not Jehovah been on our side, when men rose against us—let this be Israel's song—then, so hot was their anger, they would, like a great sea-monster, have swallowed us up alive. The roaring torrent would have swept over us, the proud waters would have swept over us. Israel is delivered from awful peril (1-5)

Blessed be Jehovah, who has saved us from being torn by their cruel teeth. Like a bird from the fowler's snare we are escaped; the snare broke, and now we are free. Our helper is Jehovah, whose name is the symbol for love Thanks be to our almighty God (6-8)

[1] 10a: "The wrath of man shall praise thee" is too stilted to be probable, and 10b makes little sense. The above paraphrase rests on a happy emendation of Duhm's, supported in part by the Septuagint.

[2] This psalm and the following six (129, 65, 66, 67, 126, 40) are probably songs of gratitude for deliverance from the exile. In the first five, the joy is exuberant and practically unbroken; in the last two (126, 40) it is crossed by some disappointment or sorrow.

to his people, and whose love is matched by his power; for he is creator of heaven and earth.

### 2. *Jehovah's Power to Protect* (129)

Jehovah has delivered Israel from protracted affliction (1-4)

Sore, sore have I[1] been oppressed, ever since the days of my bondage in Egypt; but I have never been quite overpowered. My back was furrowed with long scars like a field. But Jehovah, in his justice and love, has brought my misery to an end by cutting the cords with which the godless bound me.

Imprecation upon those who hate Zion (5-8)

Disgrace and defeat be for all that hate Zion. May they speedily wither like grass upon the housetops, which, for lack of earth, withers, ere it shoots up—which fills no reaper's arms or binder's bosom, and brings no word of blessing from the passers by.[2]

### 3. *Jehovah the Confidence of his People* (65)

Gratitude for forgiveness and the privilege of worship (1-4)

It becomes us to praise thee, O God, in the temple, in fulfilment of the vows which we made: for thou hast heard our prayer. And first, we thank thee for the forgiveness of sins. We all come to thee in our weakness, because of the sins which are too many for us, and which thou alone canst cover. O happy are those to whom thou dost grant the gracious privilege of being guests of thine, and worshippers in thy house—delighted with the blessings which it brings.

[1] Israel. [2] Cf. Ruth 2 : 4.

We thank thee also, O God of our salvation, for thy grace manifested in nature and history; for again and again thou hast heard our prayer and defended our cause by victorious awe-inspiring deeds that have filled the whole world, to its far-off lands and distant isles, with confidence in thee. Girdled with might, thou hast established and maintained the mountains, and thou dost still the raging alike of seas and nations. The peoples of the distant east and west stand in awe of thy wondrous signs and break into shouts of joy.

Gratitude for Jehovah's epoch-making deeds in history (5-8)

We thank thee also for thy goodness to our land; for thou hast visited it with thy kindly showers and watered it very richly from the bountiful river of God, and prepared it for the harvest by watering the furrows and softening the ridges with the rain-showers, and blessing all that grows upon it. Thou hast crowned the year with thy goodness;[1] and everywhere the land is fruitful, where the wheels of thy chariot have come. Yea, even the very desert pastures blossom. Hill and valley share in the blessing. The happy hills are clothed with lambs: the valleys are covered with corn. They shout and sing in joyous rivalry.

Gratitude for the fertility of the land (9-13)

### 4. *Jehovah the Deliverer* (66)

A deliverance has been wrought for Israel which has a meaning for all the world. Let every land then shout for

Universal ascription of praise to Jehovah (1-4)

[1] Hebrew, "of thy goodness": the whole year manifested his kindness: but the familiar words of the English version are not misleading.



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joy and praise the glorious name of Israel's God in songs that declare how dread a God he is. Thy works tell of manifold power; thine enemies offer thee their cringing obedience. Let all the world do thee humble homage and sing praises to thy name.

His power shown in the deliverance of his people (5-12)

Come and see what he has done, and how dread is his rule over nature and men. For nothing is too hard for him. He turns sea into dry land,[1] so that his people cross the river on foot. We will therefore call upon our souls to rejoice in him, the mighty everlasting king, whose eyes keep watch upon the heathen, so that no rebel may lift up his head. Bless Israel's God, then, O ye heathen peoples, and sing to him a loud song of praise, who brought us back from death, and kept our feet from stumbling. For, after being sore tried, like silver in the fire—brought as we were to chains and prison[2]—after being trodden under foot, the victims of sufferings extreme and manifold, thou hast brought us at last to a place of room and liberty, and our hearts are glad.

The vows of gratitude are paid (13-15)

I will therefore go to the temple and gratefully pay thee the offerings that I vowed in the time of my distress —fatlings and rams, bullocks and goats.

God answers the prayer of the pure-hearted (16-20)

Come, all ye that worship Jehovah, and listen while I tell of all that he has done for me; for in answer to my

[1] As at the Red Sea and the Jordan.

[2] The meaning of both these words is uncertain.

cry, he lifted me from under the heel of mine enemies.[1] Had the purpose of my heart been wrong, the Lord would never have heard me; but, as my purpose was pure, he did both hear and heed my prayer. Blessed be he, because he did not reject my cry nor withdraw his mercy from me.

### 5. *Jehovah's Goodness to Israel and to All Men* (67)[2]

May Jehovah's goodness to Israel bring all the world to acknowledge him (1-7)

O our God, be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause thy gracious face to shine upon us, that thy manifest goodness to us may lead the whole world to a knowledge of thy gracious ways, and of thy desire and power to help them all, that so thou mayest yet have the homage and praise of the nations, one and all. Let them all break forth with glad shouts of joy because of thy just and gracious sway. Let the nations praise thee, O God of Israel, every one. Jehovah our God has blessed us with a plentiful harvest. May his favor to us lead all the round world to the worship of him.

### 6. *The Joy of Deliverance* (126)[3]

The joy of past deliverance (1-3)

When Jehovah changed the fortunes of Zion, it seemed like a beautiful dream—too fair to be true. Then we

[1] By a reasonably probable emendation of Wellhausen's.

[2] A poetical expansion of the priestly benediction, Num. 6 : 24-26.

[3] This psalm and the next (40), with their abrupt change of tone, appear to belong to the period after the return from the exile, when the joy of deliverance was clouded by the disappointing exigencies of the situation which confronted those who returned home: cf. Haggai 1.

broke into shouts of happy laughter. The very heathen pointed to us as a people whose God had dealt greatly with them; and we ourselves took up the word, "Jehovah hath dealt greatly with us," and we were very glad.

Prayer for another deliverance (4)

O our God, why is it so different now? Change our fortunes again, we beseech thee, as thou dost fill the brooks in the dry south land with streams of autumn rain.

Hope looks through tearful eyes (5, 6)

Yea, despite all seeming, I know that thou wilt hear our prayer. Now we sow in sadness, but one day we shall reap with shouts of joy. With tear-stained faces forth we go, bearing the seed to scatter; but in God's good time we shall surely come home, with our arms full of sheaves.

### 7. *Jehovah's Deliverance an Act of Grace* (40)

Israel praises Jehovah for the deliverance which he wrought (1-3)

Long and patiently we[1] waited for Jehovah, and at last our faith was rewarded; for, in answer to our cry, he delivered us from the horror of our awful doom,[2] and set us in security again, and turned our lips to a glad new song of praise, so that all who see what he has done for us will acknowledge him as God alone.

Happy is Israel with such a God (4, 5)

Happy they who put their trust in him, and shun the noisy worshippers of lies.[3]

Thy wonders, O our God, are many, and countless are thy thoughts toward us: there is none like thee. We

[1] The church, rather than the individual, is speaking. Note plural *us* in v. 5.

[2] Most probably the exile.

[3] Idolaters.

would render thee thanks with all our heart; but what thou dost delight in and demand is not the offering of animal or bloodless sacrifice, but the obedience of the ready ear, and the heart that is willing to do thy will, as enjoined in the book of Scripture.[1] And such is the heart that we bring thee—one that loves to do thy will, one in which thy law is written. The truest gratitude is an obedient life (6-8)

Our gratitude we have also shown, as thou, O God, knowest, by eagerly proclaiming in the great congregation the glad tidings of our salvation. Gratitude expressed in public worship (9, 10)

Yea, and as we have not failed to proclaim thy faithfulness and love toward us, so do not thou fail, O our God, to show us pity and to shield us evermore by thy love and thy faithfulness. For on every side are troubles without number, and our countless transgressions have overtaken us, so that our hearts fail us. But, O our God, graciously help and save us,[2] and bring to shame and confusion all who are thirsting for our life; defeat and dishonor be upon all who long for our destruction, and shamelessly shout, "Hurrah! Hurrah!" But joy and May Jehovah pity and deliver (11-17)

[1] In such a context, the prophetic rather than the legal portion (*e.g.*, Leviticus) of the Old Testament seems to be intended.

[2] The last five verses of this psalm (13-17) reappear, with insignificant variations, as Psalm 70. It is hard to decide whether the verses formed, from the beginning, part of Ps. 40, or whether they were originally an independent psalm, afterward appended to 40 : 1-12. On the whole they seem to belong, from the beginning, to Psalm 40. Such rapid transitions of feeling are not uncommon in the Psalter (cf. Pss. 22, 126).

gladness be theirs who seek thee, and may all those who long for thy help say, "Praised be Jehovah," evermore. But as for us, we are poor and needy. O make haste,[1] thou who art able to help and save us. O linger not, I beseech thee, my God.

## V

## PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING [FOR MACCABEAN VICTORIES ?][2]

### 1. *The Constancy of Jehovah's Care* (138)

Israel thanks Jehovah for the constancy of his love (1-3)

I [3] would render thee my most hearty thanks, lowly bending toward [4] thy holy temple, and in defiance of the heathen gods, I would render thee my thanks for the constancy of thy love; for thou hast done far more than thou hast promised.[5] In answer to my prayer thou hast multiplied my strength.

[1] So Ps. 70: 5. In such an impetuous context, this seems more natural than the present text with its beautiful thought, "the Lord thinketh of me." Besides, the sudden transition to the third person, in a context full of seconds, though far from being impossible or unparalleled, would be somewhat strange.

[2] The following seven psalms (138, 144, 68, 30, 118, 116, 149) are probably songs of gratitude for Maccabean victories (167-165 B. C.). In the first two, the joy is tempered by a sense of difficulties yet to be overcome: the end is not yet. The others breathe a very vigorous sense of triumph.

[3] Collective. [4] Or "before."

[5] The precise meaning of 2c and 3b is doubtful.

When the heathen kings see how thou hast fulfilled thy promises to Israel, they too shall praise thee, and sing of thy great and glorious ways. This love will win the whole world to the worship of Jehovah (4, 5)

For from his high and distant throne Jehovah looks in love upon the lowly, but the proud he strikes down.[1] So, though my way be distressful, I know that my life is safe with thee. For with thy victorious arm thou dost repel my angry foes. Surely thou wilt finish the work which thou hast begun on me. Thou wilt not leave it undone; for thy love is everlasting. Through all distress Jehovah will continue to care for Israel (6-8)

## 2. *Jehovah the Warrior's Stay* (144 : 1-11)[2]

Blessed be my[3] God, the mighty Jehovah, my strong tower and refuge, my deliverer and defender,[4] who has taught me the art of war and laid nations at my feet. Thou art gracious far above my desert. For what is man, frail child of the earth, that thou thinkest upon him, and visitest him with thy grace?[5] for he is like a breath, and his days but a passing shadow.[6] Thanksgiving to Jehovah for his gracious help in war (1-4)

O come to us again, bow the heavens and come down, touch the hills that they smoke.[7] Shoot out thy lightning arrows, and so scatter and confound them.[8] Stretch thy Prayer for further deliverance (5-8)

[1] Emended text.

[2] The numerous quotations in this psalm from other parts of the Psalter show that it must be very late.

[3] Collective.

[4] Cf. 18 : 1, 2.

[5] Cf. 8 : 4.

[6] Cf. 39 : 5; 102 : 11.

[7] Cf. 18 : 9; 104 : 32.

[8] Cf. 18 : 14.

hand down from the height[1] and pluck me out of the great waters[2] into which I have been plunged by false and perjured aliens.

Vow of thanksgiving for the anticipated victory (9-11)

O God, with instruments and song I will make music unto thee[3] who helpest kings and who didst save thine ancient servant David[4] from the deadly sword. Pluck me out of the hand of the false and perjured aliens.

### 3. *Jehovah Leads to Victory* (68)[5]

The enemy defeated (1, 2)

Jehovah arises, his godless enemies are scattered[6] in flight before him, perishing at his presence like the smoke that vanishes or the wax that melts before the fire.

Praise to Jehovah for his power and love (3-6)

In gratitude for the victory let the righteous join in the glad jubilation of worship. Yea, praise Jehovah's name in song, make music to him[7] who rides his chariot across the deserts.[8] Jehovah is his glorious name; therefore rejoice before him. His mercy, too, is as wide as his power: for from his home in heaven[9] he sends help to the needy,

[1] Cf. 18 : 16. [2] Cf. 69 : 1, 2. [3] Cf. 33 : 3; 40 : 3.

[4] Or possibly, "who hast saved thy servant," that is, Israel, who, in vv. 1-4, sings her song of gratitude. In that case, "David" would be a gloss, suggested by the obvious indebtedness of the psalm to Psalm 18.

[5] It is quite impossible to determine the date of this magnificent, but exceedingly difficult, and in many places, very obscure psalm. On the whole, the probability seems to be in favor of a Maccabean origin (167 B. C.).

[6] The ancient words used in the advance of Israel's hosts. Num. 10 : 35.

[7] Possibly "make a path," but more probably a technical musical term, with which the obscure word *Selah* is connected.

[8] For example, from Egypt and Babylon.

[9] Or from the temple (v. 5).

fathering the fatherless and defending the widow's cause. He brings the solitary home again, and restores to comfort all who were prisoners, leaving none but the rebels in the cheerless land.

Jehovah's victories over his people's enemies (7-14)

O our God, when thou didst march through the desert at the head of thy people,[1] all nature was moved. The earth and the mountains [2] trembled at thy tread, and the sky poured rain in torrents. Thy weary ones thou didst sustain, and thou didst settle thy people in the land which thou in thy goodness hadst prepared for them. The Lord has fulfilled his promise by granting us the victory, and many are the heralds that proclaim it, telling how that kings have fled in hot haste, leaving glorious spoil for the women at home to divide—dove's feathers overlaid with silver and yellow gold, with precious stones worked upon them that glistened like snow upon the trees of Salmon.[3]

[1] Probably the reference is to some recent triumph, not to the march from Sinai in the distant past, though the language is undoubtedly suggested by Judges 5 : 4, 5.

[2] If the context describes a recent incident, Sinai (v. 8) will be a gloss.

[3] So Duhm, who regards v. 13 as an enumeration of the booty. Wellhausen takes the dove to be Israel, and the silver an gold the booty. V. 13a "Will ye lie among the sheepfolds?" seems an irrelevant reminiscence of Judges 5 : 16. Salmon was a mountain near Shechem (Jud. 9 : 48). V. 14a Duhm regards as a gloss. Wellhausen translates v. 14, "When the Almighty scattered kings, when they stumbled in the night of death." Baethgen, who translates "When the Almighty stretched out kings upon it (*i. e.*, the land), it was snowing on Salmon," frankly confesses that he does not understand the verse.

Northern jealousy of Judah (15-16); the captives (17, 18)

To Jehovah belongs the rugged mountain range of Bashan. Wherefore cast ye angry glances, ye rugged hills of Bashan, upon the hill of Zion which Jehovah has chosen for his eternal home? [1] for the victory belongs to the mighty God of Zion, who has come to the fray from his ancient seat in Sinai, surrounded by unseen hosts [2] with myriads of chariots. After the victory thou didst ascend Zion's hill [3] with trains of captives bearing gifts of homage, and the rebels shall dwell there in subjection to Israel's God.[4]

Fulfilment of the ancient oracle that promised victory (19-23)

O blessed be the Lord, who beareth us day by day, the triumphant God who helpeth us in manifold ways, and bringeth us out of deadly peril, crushing the head of his proud and iniquitous foes in accordance with the oracle which declared that he would deliver us out of our peril [5] in Bashan, and bring us back to our own land to bathe our feet in the blood of our foes—blood which our dogs should also lick.

The temple procession (24-27)

In honor of the victory of Jehovah my king, processions

[1] The people of the north resent the military success of the Jews. Judea could be seen from the northern hills—which lends point to the question.

[2] Cf. 2 Kings 6 : 16 f.

[3] Not elsewhere called "the height"; but heaven is not very appropriate in this context.

[4] A Messianic thought—the heathen subject to Jehovah. Some, however, emend, to bring the line into harmony with v. 6: the rebels shall *not* dwell.

[5] Perhaps the sea is used as a picture of peril (cf. 18 : 16); otherwise the collocation of Bashan and the sea is hard to understand.

are seen in the sanctuary, with singers in front and players behind and, between them, maidens with timbrels, and bands of nobles blessing Israel's God—Benjamin the little in front, with the princes of Judah and the princes of Galilee.[1]

Prayer that the world may acknowledge Jehovah (28-31)

Show thyself strong in our cause as of yore, from thy temple above Jerusalem, and bring all the world into subjection to thee. May kings bring thee tribute! May thy rebuke be felt by Egypt[2] and by every savage heathen nation—rulers and people alike![3] May they come from Egypt with gifts of oil,[4] and may Ethiopia speedily come with her hands full of offerings!

Ascription of praise to Jehovah (32-35)

Then will the Messianic days indeed have dawned, when all shall humbly acknowledge Jehovah. Sing, all ye kingdoms of the world, sing the praises of Israel's God, who rides through the ancient heavens. Hark! he utters

[1] In v. 26 the meaning is uncertain.

[2] The beast of the reed (v. 30); probably the crocodile, as representing Egypt. Duhm thinks the allusion is to the swine who herd among the reeds of the Jordan (cf. Gadara in the New Testament).

[3] The last two clauses of v. 30 (c, d) are desperate. The context would suggest that the thought of the verse must be the submission of the heathen —whether voluntary or enforced; but what the words actually mean no man knows. Wellhausen emends and translates: "Trample thou down the lovers of lies, and scatter the peoples who take pleasure in wars." Duhm: "Settle among those who love thy threshold, and give glad tidings to the nations that delight to visit the temple." Cheyne translates c, "that rolls itself in mire for gain of money."

[4] "With oil," instead of "princes," which is a very doubtful word in the original. Cf. Is. 57 : 9.

his mighty voice of thunder. Ascribe ye strength to Jehovah, who shelters his people Israel with his all-embracing majesty and might. From his holy place he shows himself terrible. He maketh his people strong and mighty. Blessed be he!

### 4. *Jehovah a Sure Deliverer* (30)[1]

Thanksgiving to Jehovah for his gracious deliverance (1-5)

I will extol thee, O my God, because thou hast lifted me up as out of a dungeon, and kept my foes from rejoicing over me. When in mine extremity I cried to thee for help, thou didst heed me, and save me and preserve me from death. Therefore sing to Jehovah, all ye that are his, and praise his holy name: for while his anger lasts but a moment, his favor endures for a lifetime. After every night of weeping, the morning breaks, with its shouts of gladness.

Recital of the psalmist's glad experience (6-12)

I know whereof I speak; for, when all went well, I fancied my prosperity would never be shaken. By thy favor I had long stood firm and sure, till there came a day, when thou didst hide thy face from me, and I was troubled. Then very earnestly I prayed to thee in this wise: "What doth it profit thee," I said, "if I perish and go down to the grave? for the dead cannot praise thee, nor tell of thy faithfulness. O hear me graciously, my God, and help

[1] This psalm is referred by the superscription to "the dedication of the house," that is, the temple. It was apparently employed in, if not also composed for, the dedication ceremonies of 165 B. C., when the temple was purified by Judas Maccabæus after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes.

me." My prayer was heard, for at once thou didst turn my lament into gladness. Thou didst unloose my robe of mourning and girdle me with a garment of joy, that I might praise thee without ceasing and give thee thanks forever.

### 5. *Thanksgiving for His Great Deliverance* (118)

Liturgical introduction (1-4)

Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good ; his love is everlasting. Let all in Israel say—people, priests, and proselytes [1]—his love is everlasting.

Jehovah answered the prayer of faith (5-9)

For he answered the prayer that we uttered when in straits, and brought us out into a broad place. Jehovah is ours : we have no fear. What can man do unto us ? With him to aid us, we shall see the defeat of our foes. It is good to put confidence in him—far better than to trust in mortal princes.[2]

He saved the people from the onset of the enemy (10-14)

Everywhere heathen swarmed round us like bees, and blazed about us like a fire of thorns; but in the name of Jehovah we cut them down. When we ourselves were all but thrust to the ground, our God helped us. He is our strength, and song, and saviour.

The joy of victory (15-18)

Glad cries of victory are ringing in the tents of the righteous. Jehovah's right hand has done bravely; Jehovah's right hand is exalted; Jehovah's right hand has done bravely. He has indeed chastened sorely, but he

[1] For the same enumeration, cf. 115 : 9-11.

[2] The reference is possibly to alliances with the Romans, if the psalm be Maccabean.

has not given us over to death. No! we shall not die, but live, to tell all that he has done for us.

Thanksgiving for the deliverance (19-24)

Open to us the temple doors.[1] Let us enter and offer our thanks to Jehovah.

This—say the priests—is the door to Jehovah's house, and through it the righteous may pass.

We give thee thanks for hearing and helping us; for thou hast wrought a miracle for us in exalting our little band [2] to be the founders of Jewish liberty. This glorious day [3] is Jehovah's own creation. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Prayer, the priestly blessing and festal dance (25-29)

(Prayer of the people.) O continue, we beseech thee, Jehovah, to help and prosper us.

(Answer of the priests.) In the name of Jehovah, blessed be ye all: from Jehovah's house we pronounce our blessings upon you.

(The people.) Jehovah is God alone. He has shone upon us with his gracious face.

(The priests.) Let the festal dancers unite by twining together the boughs they carry till they touch the altar's horns.[4]

[1] The procession has now reached the temple.

[2] The proverbial expression in v. 22 may mean that Zion is to become the foundation of the true kingdom of God. Or it may involve a more definite reference to the family of the Maccabees.

[3] Possibly the day of the dedication of the temple (165 B. C.) celebrated in Ps. 30.

[4] The precise sense of 27b; c is far from clear.

Thou art our God: we gratefully praise thee. Give thanks to Jehovah: for he is good. His love is everlasting.

### 6. *Deliverance out of Great Affliction* (116)

I[1] love Jehovah, because he listens to my loud entreaty;[2] for he inclined his ear to me. Therefore I will call upon his name as long as I live. Like a huntsman death caught me in his toils, I was smitten with the anguish of Sheol:[3] distress and sorrow were mine.

Jehovah heard the prayer of distress (1-3)

Then I called on the name of Jehovah. "O save me," I said, "I beseech thee, Jehovah"; and in his grace and justice and pity, this God of ours, who preserves the simple, did save me from mine affliction. I will bid my soul return to him: for he is my rest and benefactor, who has preserved me from death and sorrow, and will enable me, in the days to come, to walk without stumbling before him in the land of the living. Though[4] I was sore afflicted and fancied, in my confusion, that all men were traitors, yet I maintained my faith in God, and determined to call upon his name.[5]

He rewarded faith with deliverance (4-11)

[1] Collective.

[2] V. 1 is somewhat difficult and uncertain. Cheyne renders: I am confident that Jehovah will hear the voice of my beseeching.

[3] Cf. Ps. 18 : 4, 5.

[4] The Greek version regards Ps. 116 as two psalms, and starts the second of the two at this point (v. 10).

[5] The precise meaning and connection of vv. 10 and 11 are hard to make out, but are no doubt approximately represented by this paraphrase.

The singer gratefully fulfils his vow (12-19)

How then shall I repay Jehovah for all his many bounties to me? I will pour out a drink offering to him, calling upon his name while I pour; for he it is that has saved me, he loves to preserve the life of his saints. "O I am thy servant," I cried, "thy humble servant am I, and thou didst free me from my misery." In the temple-courts therefore, before all the people of Jerusalem I will offer Jehovah a thank offering in payment of vows and I will call upon his name, as I offer.

### 7. *The Song of Victory* (149)

Israel's song of thanksgiving for victory (1-4)

Sing a new song to Jehovah: let his praise ring in the assembly of the godly. Let Israel rejoice in her creator and king, and praise him in the dance and with instruments of music. For he loves his people, and the meek he adorns with victory.

The punishment of Israel's heathen foes (5-9)

Let the godly exult and sing in the night,[1] when the toils of day are over. With loud songs of praise to God they grasp in their hands their two-edged swords, to execute upon the heathen peoples the vengeance and judgment that are written, chaining their kings and fettering their princes. Such victory as this is the glorious destiny of all Jehovah's saints.

[1] V. 5, "upon their beds." The text is possibly faulty here, but no satisfactory emendation has been proposed.

# THE PSALMS IN CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP

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## I

### INTRODUCTION

As the Psalter was the hymn-book of the second temple, it is very natural that many of the psalms should breathe the temple atmosphere, and glow with affection for its worship. In a very special sense, the temple was Jehovah's home, and its sanctity was communicated both to the city of Jerusalem and the province of Judah. Jehovah's choice of Judah is regarded as deeply rooted in the past (78 : 68), and more than once his glory had been signally revealed in its chief city Jerusalem (46 ; 76 : 1-3), which is loved by him with a special love (87 : 2) ; and it was loved by the worshippers no less dearly. A very passion of affection is lavished by the psalmists upon it. It was the joy of the whole world (48 : 2), dear even in its desolation (102 : 14). For it was crowded with ancient memories (122 : 4, 5), and was the visible bond which held together the scattered children of Judaism (122 : 1, 8). Hopes the most daring gathered upon it ; it was to be the

centre of Jehovah's sovereignty (110 : 2); and "mother Zion," as the Septuagint translates 87 : 5 by a happy mistake, was to be the metropolis of the whole world (87). No wonder men sang

> If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
> May my right hand wither.[1]
> May my tongue cleave to my palate,
> If I remember thee not,
> If I esteem not Jerusalem
> My highest joy (137 : 5, 6).

By the time these psalms were sung, the political glory of Jerusalem had long since vanished, and the halo with which fond hearts invested her was the halo of religion. The glory of the city was the temple, and the passion of the devout was centred upon the temple worship. It is on Zion that praise is seemly (65 : 1), and there that vows are to be paid (116 : 18, 19); above all, it is there that Jehovah commands the blessing of eternal life (133 : 3). It was an inexpressibly blessed privilege to be permitted to worship within the holy courts (65 : 4), and men would endure the discomforts of long and perilous ways, if only in the end they might look upon Jehovah's lovely dwelling-place, and stand before their God in Zion (84 : 6, 7). They can hardly find words to express their affection for

[1] The Hebrew consonants may mean "forget" or "be forgotten," neither of which is very satisfactory. Graetz's very simple transposition of the consonants yields the above admirable sense.

it all (26 : 8). They can only utter their overwhelming joy in the touchingly simple words—

> *I was glad* when they said to me,
> We will go to the house of Jehovah (122 : 1).

The service was gorgeous and must have been very impressive, especially to an Oriental. Occasionally we catch glimpses of a happy festal procession (42 : 4; 68 : 24; 118 : 27), and we can form some faint idea of the joy with which the feast of booths was celebrated (81 : 1-10). Music, which is continually referred to (81 : 2; 92 : 3; 98 : 5, 6; 150), must have played an important part, and the sights were doubtless often very beautiful, as, for example, the procession which celebrated the brilliant victory sung in the sixty-eighth psalm—

> Singers going before and players behind,
> And maidens with timbrels between them (v. 25).

It is easy to understand why, when a man was torn from these things, his heart was bowed down within him (42 : 4, 5), and why no devastation was so awful as the devastation of Jehovah's holy and beautiful house (74 : 3 ff.)

## II

### THE PSALMS OF WORSHIP

### 1. *Jehovah's Triumphal Entry into the Sanctuary* (24 : 7-10) [1]

Jehovah's entrance into Jerusalem (7-10)

Lift up your heads, higher and higher still, ye ancient gates of Jerusalem, that the glorious king may enter in.

But who then is this glorious king?

Jehovah, the mighty one, the hero; Jehovah, the hero in war.

Lift up your heads, higher and higher still, ye ancient gates, that the glorious king may enter in.

Who is he, then, this glorious king?

Jehovah of hosts, he is the glorious king.

### 2. *The Vision of the Temple* (122)

The joy of visiting Jerusalem with its ancient memories (1-5)

It is sweet to look back upon our pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I was glad when my comrades [2] proposed to visit

[1] Probably Psalm 24 was formed by the union of two originally independent psalms. A reasonable connection, however, can be established between the two—the latter dealing with Jehovah's entry into Jerusalem, the former with the conditions on which men may enter. Vv. 7-10 may be very early, among the very oldest fragments in the Psalter. Ewald regards it at the festive song with which the ark was brought to Zion (cf. 2 Sam. 6). Is may, however, be later, sung on the return of the ark after some victory (Num. 10 : 36; 1 Sam. 4 : 7 ff.). In this case, it would still be pre-exilic. Some again regard it as a very late psalm, referring to the Messianic days, when Jehovah will enter Jerusalem.

[2] No doubt, of the dispersion.

the temple. O the joy of standing within thy gates, Jerusalem, and gazing at thee with thy walls restored—in thy compactness fit emblem of the unity that binds thy children together as brethren, though scattered throughout the world. What memories crowded upon me, of the pilgrimages that all through the centuries the tribes of Israel had made, as the ancient law ordained.[1] There, too, had been set[2] David's royal throne, where justice was dispensed.

Pray for the peace of the holy city; may all that love thee prosper! Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity[3] within thy palaces. For the sake of my brethren and comrades throughout the world, I wish thee peace—for thou art the home of every Jewish heart—and also for the sake of the temple of our God, I will pray for thy welfare. Prayer for Jerusalem's welfare (6-9)

### 3. *The Pilgrim's Longing for the Sanctuary* (84)

How lovely is yonder house of thine, O mighty God of Israel! In the far land from which we have come, our soul was spent with longing for thy courts; and now that we are so near them, our whole being leaps forth with a The pilgrim's joy at the sight of the temple (1-4)

[1] Ex. 23 : 17; 34 : 23; Deut. 16 : 16.

[2] Or "are set" thrones, the reference being perhaps to the Sanhedrin. The object of the pilgrimages may have been twofold—to worship and to have disputes settled.

[3] As commonly in Hebrew poetry, there is here a play upon the words *shalom*, *shalwaḥ* and *Jerushalem*, which it is impossible to reproduce in English.

ringing cry toward thee, the living God. Here has Israel, like a mother-bird in her nest, found a home for herself and her young within thy house, thou mighty Jehovah, my God and king. O how happy must they[1] be who dwell here, and praise thee without ceasing!

The pilgrim's progress through the wilderness to Zion (5-7)

Nay, but happy, too, are those whose strength is in Jehovah, and whose hearts are filled with thoughts of pilgrimage;[2] for even the hot and dusty valleys, where only the balsam grows, seem in their sight as though smiling with green, blest by fountains or rain. On they march, gathering strength as they go,[3] sustained by the assurance that the God of gods will reveal himself[4] to them in Zion.

Prayer (8, 9)

(O mighty God of Israel, hearken to our prayer and look upon the face of our anointed defender.)[5]

Joy in the worship and in God (10-12)

For a day in thy courts, though it be standing at thy threshold, is better than a thousand in the lands of the

[1] The priests, or perhaps, more generally, the people of Jerusalem.

[2] Instead of the somewhat unintelligible "highways" (the Hebrew has no "to Zion"), it seems better to read, with the Septuagint, "pilgrimages."

[3] But in so picturesque and definite a context the other translation is equally probable, if not more so: On they go from rampart to rampart, that is, from city to city.

[4] So, the Greek version, correctly no doubt.

[5] Our shield (v. 9) may be objective (O God! behold our shield), or vocative (O God our shield! behold). If objective, it will be parallel to "thine anointed," if the anointed is an individual. On this view, the verse has been regarded as an interjected prayer for the high-priest. The "anointed" might, however, not impossibly be the people itself.

ungodly.[1] For our God will defend [2] and favor all who walk uprightly; he will honor and bless them with every good. O mighty God of Israel, how happy is the man who puts his trust in thee!

### 4. *Yearning for Fellowship with God* (42, 43) [3]

Passionate yearning for a vision of God (42 : 1-3)

I long for thee, O my God, as longs the hart for the water brooks in the drought of summer; I thirst for thee, thou living God. O when will it be mine to behold [4] thy face in the temple? Day and night have tears been my meat; for the enemy mock me unceasingly. "What has become," they say, "of the living God of whom you boast?"

Past and present: a contrast (4-5)

My soul melts, as I think of it all—how, with the company of nobles [5] I used to go up with ringing shouts of praise among the happy, festal crowd. How changed all is now!

[1] From which the pilgrims had come.

[2] "Battlement" instead of "sun" in v. 11.

[3] These two psalms must originally have constituted only one. This is proved by the similarity of language, situation, and context, by the refrain, and by the absence (at least in the Hebrew text) of a superscription to Ps. 43, which is the only psalm of this Korahite group (42 to 49) that lacks a superscription.

[4] Instead of "appear before," by an extremely probable change of vowels.

[5] The rare and difficult word rendered "I led them" in R. V., and supposed to refer to the leading of the festal procession, may possibly have to be emended, as Duhm suggests, on the basis of the Septuagint. The word he proposes is the word rendered "excellent" in 16 : 3b.

Why art thou bowed down, O my soul, and why dost thou storm within me? Hope thou in God, for I know that I shall one day praise him as my mighty God and Saviour.

Anguish issues in hope (6-11)

Yet despite the hope I cherish, my soul is still bowed down; therefore all the more shall I think of thee. From the land across the Jordan, near the giant Hermon with the neighbor hills,[1] flood after flood pours its waters upon me from the angry heaven, and I am overwhelmed in a sea of troubles. Daily[2] I pray to the God of my life; "O

[1] This whole passage abounds in difficulties. "Hermons" in the plural, probably because of the mountain's various spurs. Some suppose that the first two proper names stand for Palestine, which is indicated by its chief river and mountain; but the variety in the topographical notice seems too definite for that. The district indicated is apparently that about the sources of the Jordan; with this agrees admirably the imagery of v. 7, which is used half literally, half metaphorically—the scenery expressing the mood of the Psalmist's soul. There is much doubt about the hill Mizar, or the "hill of littleness," supposed—rather improbably—by Baethgen to stand for Zion. It is more likely to be a hill in the neighborhood already indicated; and Professor G. A. Smith (Historical Geography, p. 477) has called attention to the fact that three names of places, with very similar spelling, occur in that very district. But the whole passage is involved in difficulty. Some suppose the psalmist to be an exile *far from* the land of Jordan, etc. Wellhausen translates, "My soul is cast down within me, therefore on thee do I think, thou diminutive mountain, above all the land of Jordan and of Hermon."

[2] Wellhausen and many others remove v. 8: "By day Jehovah commands his kindness, and by night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life." Its connection with the context is certainly anything but clear, and metrically the verse is too long. Yet clause c at any rate is quite in place; and probably at least a part of a or b should be retained.

thou who art my rock, why hast thou forgotten me, and why dost thou suffer my foes to crush me, and drive me into mourning?" For it cuts me to the heart to listen to their everlasting taunts, as they ask me, "What has become of the God you boast of?"

Why art thou bowed down, O my soul, and why dost thou storm within me? Hope thou in God, for I know that I shall one day praise him as my mighty God and Saviour.

Prayer for delivery and guidance: hope in God (43 : 1-5)

Defend my cause, O God, and give me the victory. From a people that knows no pity, from treacherous and crooked men, O deliver me; for thine is the power, O thou who art my God and stronghold. O why then hast thou cast me off, why dost thou suffer my foes to crush me, and drive me into mourning? Send forth thy light and thy faithfulness—angels twain—that they may lead me over my darkened way, and bring me, in accordance with thy promise, to the temple hill whereon thou dwellest. Then with gladness would I again take part in the solemn worship of the God who is the joy and the rejoicing of my heart, and upon the cithern I would praise thee, O Jehovah, my God.

Why art thou bowed down, O my soul, and why dost thou storm within me? Hope thou in God, for I know that I shall one day praise him as my mighty God and Saviour.

## 5. *A Morning Prayer for Guidance* (5)

May my morning prayer be heard (1-3)

Lend thine ear, O Jehovah, to the words of my prayer, whether they be murmured or cried aloud. For to thee I pray, my king and my God. Thou hearest my voice in the morning. In the morning I make me ready for thy worship and watch intently for a sign from thee.

Worship is a blessing for the good only (4-7)

To me thou wilt listen, but not to the wicked; for thou art a God that abhorrest wickedness. No evil man can be a guest of thine. Braggarts dare not stand in thy presence; the champions of falsehood and cruelty thou dost hate and destroy—they are thine abomination. But, as for me, it is not of my merit, but of thy great mercy, that I may come into thy presence and prostrate me before thy holy temple.

May the godless be punished (8-10),

Guide me safely, O my God, along life's way, and preserve me from the least transgression of thy law, and clear my path of stumbling-blocks. For mine enemies are watchful. Their words are insincere. Their hearts are set upon the destruction of others; and though they wear the fair face, and speak smooth words, their throats are like an open grave, which clamor for fresh victims evermore. Hold them guilty, O God. May their scheming bring them to ruin. In the midst of their numberless sins hurl them down for their defiance of thee.

But everlasting joy shall be the portion of those who love thy name; for their faith in thee thou dost reward by

defending them. Yea, it is thy delight to bless the righteous : thou settest upon their head the beautiful crown [1] of thy favor. and the pious guided and protected (11, 12)

### 6. *The Prayer of the Sincere Worshipper* (26)

Defend my cause, O my God, for my life has been blameless, and I have put my trust unwaveringly in thee. Test me and prove me, try my inmost thoughts and feelings, for thy love has been an inspiration to me, leading me to walk in thy ways. Never had I dealings with the worthless nor with those who loved darkness. I hate them, and I would not sit in any gathering of theirs. A confession of innocence (1-5)

I formally renounce them, and, with my conscience thus cleared, I take part in the festal procession around thine altar, singing a loud song of thanks and telling of thy wonders. O my God, I love thy house, and the place where thy glory [2] dwells. Glad participation in worship (6-8)

O forbid that I should share the fate of sinners like those—bloodthirsty men with their hands full of bribes and villany. Not such am I ; for my life is blameless. Redeem me therefore and be gracious to me ; and now, since my path is smooth, and I can walk without stumbling, I will bless my God among his worshippers assembled. Prayer for preservation (9-12)

[1] "Shield" has been emended to "turban," a word not unlike it.

[2] Primarily conceived in a concrete sense, cf. Ex. 16 : 10; here no doubt partly spiritualized.

### 7. *Joy in Jehovah and His Sanctuary* (27)

Confidence in Jehovah (1-3)

Jehovah is the light and stronghold of my life, and he it is who helps me. Whom have I then to fear? For when bands of wicked foemen assailed me with deadly cruelty, thou didst defend me and it was they who stumbled and fell. So, though war should come, and a host encamp against me, I shall be fearless and confident.

Delight in the temple (4-6)

But the deepest prayer of my heart is that the privilege may be mine of dwelling evermore in thy house,[1] taking part in [2] its stately worship, and tasting the sweetness of thy presence. For in the evil days he hides me in the shelter of his tent, and sets me on a rock:[3] and now that he has given me the victory over all mine enemies, I will join the festal procession [4] and offer sacrifices of thanksgiving amid loud strains of music, singing and playing in his honor.

Earnest and confident entreaty (7-13)

Hear my loud cry, O my God, and graciously answer me. My heart saith to thee, "I seek thy face."[5] O hide

[1] As the literal fulfilment of this wish is impossible if the speaker were an individual, the reference must be to the community, and that this is the reference has been already made clear by v. 3.

[2] The word in v. 4c rendered in the English version by "inquire" means either attending to the arrangements for the service, or perhaps, visiting the temple early.

[3] There may be here a covert allusion to the temple hill.

[4] So the Greek version: cf. 26 : 6.

[5] So Duhm.

it not from me. Put me not away in thine anger; for I am thy servant, and thou hast been my helper. O leave me not, O God, my Saviour. For thy love is more than the love of father or mother: though they forsake me, thou wilt take me up. Show me thy way, and lead me along a path that is smooth, that mine enemies may not triumph over me with their lies and cruelty. O make me not their prey. Surely I had perished, had I not been sustained by the sure hope of seeing the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living.

Wait upon Jehovah. Let your heart be brave and strong; and once again I say, wait upon Jehovah.

### 8. *An Evening Invocation* (134)

Hark! Bless Jehovah, ye servants of his, that minister by night in his temple. Lift up your hands in prayer toward the holy place, and bless Jehovah. The pilgrims or people address the priests (1, 2)

From his home in Zion may Jehovah send forth his blessing upon you—a rich blessing, too, for he is the Creator of heaven and earth. The priestly response (3)

# THE HISTORICAL PSALMS

# THE HISTORICAL PSALMS

## I

### INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew church took refuge from the present in the future and in the past. From the commonplace and often disheartening experiences of the days in which her lot was cast, she strained her eyes forward to the day when Jehovah would come to judge the world and give her the victory, or back to the old days when his hand was so manifestly shaping her fortunes. Thus it comes to pass that several psalms devote themselves wholly and others partially to a consideration of the past. They call up again the great figures of early Israel—Moses, Aaron, and Samuel—and they dwell long and earnestly upon the varied discipline through which God planted Israel upon the holy land. The historical psalms of the Hebrew Psalter are unique among national poetry that takes a retrospect of the past, in that their object is never to glorify the nation which sings them. On the contrary, they are intended rather to humble the singers, by show-

ing them how their ancestors had sinned without ceasing against the abounding love of God.

The past is a riddle to be expounded (78 : 2), for history is the field in which God's mysterious purpose may be learned. In its essence, that purpose is one of love—everlasting love (136)—and that is why faith can re-enforce itself by thinking of the days of old (143 : 5). In times of sorrow and persecution, when the faith of good men is surprised and shaken, they turn for inspiration to the past, especially to the ever memorable deliverance from Egypt (81 : 10). For those were the days when Jehovah mightily and miraculously interposed to save them, taking the burden from their shoulders, and the too heavily laden baskets from their hands (81 : 6). In some psalms (78, 105, 106, 136) the whole early history of the people is lovingly followed from point to point, and the memory of the stirring days of the conquest is still affectionately treasured—the days when Jehovah overthrew Sisera and Jabin, Oreb and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna (83 : 9-11). Some psalms again glow with a passionate and not unnatural appeal to Jehovah that the glories of those ancient days should be repeated in these (77, 83).

But besides recalling the love of God, the past recalls but too vividly the shame and disobedience of Israel. God is love and the fathers provoked him—these are the themes round which Israel's history everlastingly rotates (cf. 95 : 7-11). In spite of all he had done, they *soon*

forgot (106 : 13), turning to idolatry even on the mount of revelation (106 : 19). The fathers were stubborn and rebellious (78 : 8) and Israel's history has been marked throughout by a tragic consistency; for "like sire, like son"—"*we* have sinned with our fathers" (106 : 6). But in privilege as well as in transgression, the church of the present is one with the church of the past. In some sense the spirit of the ancient leaders is still with the present church (99 : 6 ff.), and, for David's sake, if not for her own, Jehovah may be persuaded to restore and bless (132 : 10). The historical psalms, besides suggesting the indefeasible continuity of the national life amid all perils of extinction from foes without or from the deadlier sins within, also go to show what an exhilarating sense of reality inspired their conception of God. He had not merely looked upon the people from a distant throne in heaven; he had come down among them and taken them on his arms. And though in the long course of the centuries he had many a time suffered them to be "battered with the shocks of doom," it was that they might be shaped into more perfect instruments of his mysterious will, and used for noblest service.

## II

### PSALMS EMPHASIZING THE UNFAITHFULNESS OF THE PEOPLE [1]

### 1. *The Lessons of their Past Acts of Apostasy* (78)

The story of the past is full of instruction and warning (1-8)

O my people, give careful heed to the lesson that I am about to read you from the riddling story of the past. The tale which came down from our fathers across the generations—the glorious tale of Jehovah's might and the marvellous things which he did, we shall hand on to the generations to come. He gave our fathers a law with its promises and threats to declare to their children, and to be rehearsed by each succeeding age, in order that the memory of all that he had done might lead them to put their confidence in him and keep his commandments, unlike their stubborn and rebellious fathers with their faithless tempers and their restless hearts.

Marvels of the Exodus (9-16)

Ephraim's warriors [2] played the traitor to Jehovah's cause, and turned back when the struggle came. They

[1] Psalms 78, 106, and 81 differ from the four which follow (105, 135, 136, 114) in being of a more sombre tone. While the last four are full of gladness and gratitude, the three former are an implicit exhortation to repentance.

[2] V. 9; the children of Ephraim, either "equipped with the bow," that is, archers; or "were a deceitful bow." Cf. the context and v. 57, where three of the same words recur. Some omit the verse here.

would not live in the spirit of the law to which they had pledged themselves. They forgot Jehovah's wonderful deeds which they had seen with their own eyes. Wonderful things, too, Jehovah had done in the presence of their fathers in the land of Egypt [1] and in the wilderness—cleaving the Red Sea and leading them between the walls of water, guiding them in the day by the cloud and in the night by the glow of fire, cleaving rocks in the desert and bringing forth from them rivers of water for the people to drink.

The people's distrust and rebellious challenge of God (17-20)

Yet in this desert they went on in their sin and rebellion against the most high God, challenging his power to give them the bread they desired. "Yes," they said, "by a stroke he drew torrents of water from the rock; but, much as he loves us, can he also spread a table for us in the wilderness, with bread and meat upon it?"

The divine chastisement (21-31)

When Jehovah heard this challenge, he broke forth in flaming indignation against his people for their distrust of his power to help them. From the open doors of heaven he rained down upon them manna—the food which the angels eat—and every man ate his fill. Then by his power he sent a south-east wind, and rained feathered fowl upon them, thick as the sand on the sea-shore, right into the heart of their camp, and they ate to their heart's content. But while their mouths were yet full, in his indignation he slew some of their sturdiest youths.

[1] Zoan (v. 12), that is, Tanis, the capital of eastern Egypt.

The lesson not learned (32-37)

Yet, in spite of his miracles, they kept on in their sin and unbelief. So he made the years of their lives to pass like a breath amid sudden and ceaseless terrors. When he slew them, then they would turn to him and earnestly seek him, calling to mind that he was their rock and redeemer, and out of their restless and unfaithful hearts they would speak to him with words that were fair but false.

The divine compassion amid provocation and ingratitude (38-58)

But as for him, he is pitiful and forgiving, and loath to destroy. Many a time he turns away his anger and refuses to stir up all his wrath. He remembered how frail they were, like the wind that passeth and never comes back. How often they provoked him to anger in the desert, tempting and vexing him again and again, forgetful of the power with which he had redeemed them on that memorable day, when he revealed his signs and wonders in Egypt! He turned the streams into blood and made the water unfit to drink. He sent among them destructive flies and frogs. He gave over the harvest, for which they had toiled, to caterpillar and locust. He slew their fruit-trees with hail and frost: he abandoned their cattle to the hail and lightning. He sent angels of destruction among them—Anger, Indignation, Wrath, and Distress—giving Anger free course. He gave them over without restraint to the pestilence, smiting the first-born in every Egyptian home; but, like a good shepherd, he led his own people forth through the wilderness, preserving them from danger and fear, and drowning their foes in the sea.

He brought them to his holy land—even to the mountains[1] of Canaan which he had won by his might. He drove out the nations thereof and apportioned their land into homes for the tribes of Israel. But, in the faithless spirit of their fathers, they rebelled against their most high God, and broke his law, and played the traitor with their false and idolatrous worship, which grieved him bitterly.

Idolatry of Israel in Canaan, and its punishment (59-67)

When he heard of it he was indignant, and in his utter abhorrence of the faithless people, he disowned the tent in Shiloh where he had made his home, and suffered the ark —symbol of his strength and glory—to be taken by the enemy,[2] indignantly abandoning his chosen people to sword and flame. No wedding-song was sung for the maidens ; priests fell by the sword and widows died unwept.[3] Like a strong man who wakes out of sleep, after having drunk deeply of wine, so the Lord awoke from his long forbearance, and inflicted eternal disgrace upon the rebel people[4] of Israel, rejecting them utterly.

The divine choice of Judah (68-72)

But in their place he chose the tribe of Judah, with its beloved hill of Zion whereon he built a temple to stand as long as heaven and earth. From the sheepfolds he took David his servant to shepherd his chosen people ; and with true shepherd's heart, he fed and led them wisely.

[1] Some think Zion (cf. 68b).

[2] An allusion to its capture by the Philistines (1 Sam. 5 : 11).

[3] So the Septuagint.

[4] V. 66 : The context makes it fairly plain that the " adversaries " are Israel (cf. v. 67), not the Philistines.

## 2. *Jehovah's Mercy and Israel's Ingratitude* (106)

Jehovah's mercy to his people (1-3)

Praise ye Jehovah and give thanks to him, for he is good, his love is everlasting. The story of his splendid deeds of might can never be fully told. Happy are those who praise him by unceasing obedience to his righteous laws.

Prayer (4, 5)

O remember us now, despite our sin, with the favor thou didst show to thy chosen people of old, and grant us thy gracious help, that the holy joy and pride that were theirs may be ours. As we are like them in our sin and perversity, so may we be like them in our experience of thy love.

Israel's repeated ingratitude and apostasy in the early days (6-33)

In Egypt in the days of old, our fathers, unmindful of the miracles of thy love, rebelled against the Most High[1] at the Red Sea; yet to show how mighty he was, he saved them, drying up the sea with a word, leading them through its depths as over pasture-land, and delivering them from their cruel plight by drowning their foes—every man of them. The victory taught them to believe his word, and touched their lips to praise. But in their impatience they soon forgot what he had done, and indulging unseemly appetite, they began, in the desert, to put his power to the test. He gave them what they asked and sent with it a wasting sickness.[2] Then jealousy

[1] Instead of "at the sea" (v. 7) read "against the most high," on the basis of a probable emendation suggested by the Septuagint.

[2] Duhm emends to "loathing," as in Num. 11 : 20.

broke out against Moses and the holy Aaron on the part of the godless company of Dathan and Abiram ;[1] but they met an awful doom—being swallowed of the earth and consumed by fire.

They were guilty, too, of idolatry even on the mount of revelation, exchanging their glorious God for the molten image of an ox that ate grass. They forgot all his mighty and marvellous and terrible deeds at the Red Sea and in Egypt, so he purposed to destroy them : but Moses his elect saved them from his deadly anger by stepping into the breach.

They were also unbelievers ; they would not trust his promise to bring them to the land of Canaan, but they despised that delightsome land, and broke out into murmurings at the report of the spies. So with uplifted hand he swore that he would make them fall in the wilderness, and that, in the after time, he would scatter them in exile throughout the world.

Then, idolaters as ever, they turned from their own liv-

[1] Korah is not known to the prophetic narrative (Num. 16 : 12, 25) known as JE, nor yet to Deuteronomy, which rests upon that history (Dt. 11 : 6). But, as the story of Korah's rebellion, such as we have it in the priestly narrative (Num. 16), was in all probability current when the psalm was written, we are left to conjecture why the name was here omitted. Perhaps the omission is simply due to the metrical structure of the verse, which is satisfied with two names ; or there may have been a reluctance to allude to this incident, considering the importance of the Korahites in the temple service ; or most probably the late story of Korah's rebellion had not yet been combined with the older, in which only Dathan and Abiram figure.

ing God to the lifeless god of Moab and sacrificed to him. But Jehovah in his anger sent a plague, which was not stayed till the priestly Phinehas executed judgment; and for this righteous act of his, the priesthood was bestowed upon his family forever.

They also provoked and angered Jehovah at the waters of Meribah, and stung Moses into reckless speech, for which he paid a grievous penalty.

Israel's guilt and Jehovah's forgiveness in the subsequent history (34-46)

Again, instead of destroying, as Jehovah commanded, the nations of Canaan among whom they came, they mixed with them and learned to do as they did, adopting their fatal practice of idolatry and shedding the blood of their innocent children in sacrifice to the demon-gods of Canaan, till not only themselves but the land was polluted by their cruel and idolatrous worship. Then Jehovah's indignation flamed into abhorrence; and, though they were his own people, he put them under the sway of their enemies, who oppressed them and brought them low. Often as he delivered them, they persisted in their rebellious purpose. But, mindful of his covenant, and moved to pity by the greatness of his love, he regarded their cry of distress, and made their captors take pity upon them.

Prayer for restoration (47)

Pity us, O our God, as thou didst pity our fathers, and save us, and gather us from the nations among whom we are scattered, that we may give thanks to thy holy name and make thy praise our boast.

### 3. *Israel's Inexcusable Disobedience* (81)

The ancient festival to be ushered in with music (1-5)

The feast of tabernacles has come. Let us celebrate it with glad strains of music. Ye people all, send up ringing shouts of praise to Israel's God our strength. Ye Levites, make music on the timbrel, the sweet cithern and the harp. Ye priests, blow the trumpet to usher in the new year [1] with the celebration of our festival, in accordance with the law that Jehovah gave Israel at their departure from Egypt—that land whose language was strange to them.[2]

Jehovah oracularly reminds the people of his law and of his redemption of them (6-10)

"It was I," said Jehovah, "who took the burden off your shoulders, and the heavy-laden baskets from your hands. From the thunder-cloud I heard your cry of distress and delivered you, and knit you closer to myself by testing you [3] at the waters of Meribah. O listen, ye people of mine, to my warnings. There must never be among you the worship of another God; for I am your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, and I will satisfy your desires.

The people's disobedience (11, 12)

But [4] despite my love and my promises, my people refused to listen, so I abandoned them to the devices of their own stubborn hearts.

[1] The lunar year, which began in harvest.

[2] Some think that with 5c a new psalm begins.

[3] It is very hard to trace any connection between 7ab and 7c.

[4] The poet here passes abruptly from the scene on Sinai to a consideration of the religious temper of the subsequent history.

The blessing which obedience might still secure (13-16)

But oh! that they would listen and walk in my ways; then would they learn the power of my love. I would turn my hand against their foes, and lay them low, so that the foe would have to cringe before them in everlasting terror.[1] I would feed them to the full with the richest wheat and the finest honey."

## III

### PSALMS EMPHASIZING THE LOVE OR POWER OF GOD[2]

### 1. *Jehovah's Unceasing Care Over Israel* (105)

Praise Jehovah for his fidelity to his ancient covenant (1-11)

Ye children of Abraham the servant of Jehovah, and of Jacob his elect, give thanks to your God, call upon his name, publish to all the world what he has done for Israel. Celebrate his wonders in music and song. Glory in his holy name, and learn of the love he has shown in the past of his people, and still can show to-day. Study with joy that past—full as it is of wonders and judgments upon Israel's foes—and it will teach you his power and his faithfulness.

He is the God of Israel, but his judgments have swept the world. He is ever mindful of his ancient promise to bestow the land of Canaan—the promise he solemnly made to Abraham and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob forever.

[1] For "time" in v. 15, perhaps read "terror," by a very simple change.

[2] The four following psalms are more exuberant in tone than the last three; see note on p. 158 (note 1).

Jehovah's watchful care over the early fathers (12-22)

When they were very few, and as it were but pilgrims in the land, wandering from nation to nation and people to people, he let no one oppress them, and he even punished kings[1] for their sake, forbidding them to touch one who was his anointed[2] or his prophet.[3] When he summoned a famine over the land and cut off all its sustenance, he sent Joseph before them, who, though sold as a serf and afterward put in galling chains and fetters, yet was shown in God's good time, by his correct interpretation of the dream, to have spoken by divine inspiration. Then he was advanced to honor; for the royal Pharaoh sent and set him free, and made him lord of his house and of all his possessions, with power to imprison and chastise[4] his officers as he pleased.

His championship of Israel in Egypt (23-37)

In this way Israel came to Egypt and dwelt there as a stranger. But their God made them numerous and stronger than the Egyptians whom he inspired with a crafty hatred of his people. Then he sent his chosen servants Moses and Aaron by whom he wrought wonderful plagues among the people of Egypt. He brought darkness upon them, but that did not bring them to listen[5] to his words. He turned their waters into blood and killed their fish. He sent a plague of frogs that even entered

[1] Pharaoh and Abimelech (Gen. 12; 20; 26).

[2] Hebrew, *Messiah*.

[3] Abraham is called a prophet in Gen. 20: 7.

[4] Or ipstruct (so Septuagint).

[5] Reading in v. 28 "they kept not" instead of "they rebelled not."

the palace. He summoned locusts and lice to cover the land. He sent storms of lightning and showers of hail which smote all their fruit-trees to pieces. He summoned countless swarms of locusts and caterpillars, which ate the country bare. He smote all the first-born throughout the land, and thereafter led his people out, laden with silver and gold, not one being footsore among them. Panic-stricken Egypt was glad when they went away.

His goodness to them in bringing them safely to Canaan (38-45)

Jehovah still followed his people with love, covering them with a canopy of cloud by day and of fire to give light in the night. At their entreaty he sent them quails and gave them heavenly bread to their heart's desire. Water, too, he gave them in abundance, though it was desert; he smote a rock and forth it gushed. And all this he did, because he was mindful of his inviolable promise to Abraham his servant. With joy and gladness he led his elect people forth into Canaan, and gave them the lands of the native peoples, and the fruit of all their toil. His design in it all was that they should respond to his love by obeying the laws which he gave them.

### 2. *Jehovah's Love Revealed in Nature and History* (135)

Call to praise (1-3)

Praise Jehovah, praise his name, ye servants of his, who minister in the courts of his house. Praise Jehovah and make music to him; for gracious and lovely is he.

Jehovah has chosen Israel to be his own dear people, and well I know there is no God like him. Nature and history alike reveal him. In heaven and earth and in the deep waters he has wrought his will.[1] From the earth he makes vapor ascend to form clouds. Lightning he sends with the rain-storms, and he brings the wind out of his storehouses.

Jehovah's might as revealed in nature (4-7)

History, too, reveals him. Egypt's first-born, both of man and beast, he smote, and signs and wonders he wrought in that land—upon king and courtiers. Many were the nations that he smote and mighty were the kings that he slew—Sihon, king of the Amorites, Og, king of Bashan, and the kings of Canaan all; and their land he gave his people Israel to possess.

Jehovah's might as revealed in Israel's early history (8-12)

His fame is everlasting, and what he has done will never be forgotten. For he takes pity upon his people, and vindicates their cause. The heathen idols[2] are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths that cannot speak, eyes that cannot see, ears that cannot hear a prayer, mouths that cannot breathe. May those who make them and those who trust in them become impotent as they!

Contrast between Jehovah and the heathen gods (13-18)

All Israel, bless Jehovah, ye people, priests, and Levites and proselytes.[3] Blessed be Jehovah out of Zion, his home.

Bless Jehovah (19-21)

[1] Cf. 115 : 3.
[2] For vv. 15-18, cf. 115 : 4-8.
[3] Cf. 115 : 9-11; 118 : 2-4.



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### 3. *The Revelation of Jehovah's Love in Israel's History* (136)

Ascription of thanks (1-3)

Give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good; his love is everlasting. He is the God of gods, and Lord of lords. Give thanks to him; for his love is everlasting.[1]

Jehovah's love as revealed in the marvels of nature (4-9)

All nature and history are radiant with that love. He it is alone who works wonders. In wisdom he created the heavens and stretched the earth over the waters.[2] He made great lights—the sun to rule the day, the moon and stars to rule the night.

Jehovah's love as revealed in Israel's history (10-26)

History, too, reveals his love to Israel. He smote Egypt's first-born and brought Israel out of the land by the strength of his outstretched arm. He smote the Red Sea and led Israel through, and into its waters he shook Pharaoh and his army. Then he led his people through the desert and dealt death to kings that were great and noble—Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan—giving their land to his servant Israel to possess. He remembered us in our lowliness, and freed us from our foes. He satisfies the desires of all. O give thanks to the God of heaven; for his love is everlasting.

[1] This is repeated as a refrain in every verse of the psalm.
[2] Cf. 24 : 2.

## 4. *The Significance of the Deliverance from Egypt* (114)

In the old days when Israel went forth from barbarous[1] Egypt, he chose them to be his holy people, over whom he should rule in Judah.[2] At the sight of this terrible God, the Red Sea and the Jordan fled in terror, and the mountains of Sinai leaped like lambs.

Nature affrighted at the exodus of Israel from Egypt (1-4)

What is it that causes the waters to flee, and the hills to leap? Is it not the dread presence of Israel's God? Thou dost well, then, O earth, to tremble at that presence: for mighty are the marvels that he works. He turns rocks into pools, and flint into fountains.

Affrighted at the terrible presence of Israel's mighty God (5-8)

[1] Barbarous in the Greek sense—speaking a strange language.

[2] This paraphrase does not represent the grammar of v. 2, in which Judah is parallel to Israel; but it gives the general sense. In post-exilic times, Judah was regarded as the true Israel (cf. Chronicles), and in the later literature, the word Israel often stands for Judah. If 2a be rendered "Judah became his sanctuary," the allusion will be partly to the temple.

# THE IMPRECATORY PSALMS

# THE IMPRECATORY PSALMS

## I

### INTRODUCTION

To a delicate moral sense, the so-called cursing psalms have always proved a stumbling-block. Many of the imprecations are indeed very terrible—the climax being reached perhaps by that psalmist who counts it a glad day for the righteous when his eyes shall see vengeance and he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked (58 : 10). The strange thing, too, is that sometimes this wild longing for vengeance flashes out from the tenderest hearts (cf. 41 : 10; 140 : 9-11; 143 : 12; 137 : 7-9). It has been hard to see what place such themes can have in a literature of revelation, and many have been the devices to explain away the seeming offence.

It has been urged, for example, that the hatred of the psalmist is directed not against the sinner but against his sins. Needless to say, this explanation, besides being flagrantly untrue to the obvious facts, involves a distinction between the sinner and his sin which antiquity would hardly have recognized. Again, it has been urged that

what such psalms contain is rather prediction than imprecation. In other words, the psalmist says, "The wicked shall be destroyed," rather than "May he be destroyed!" The ambiguity in the usage of the Hebrew imperfect tense lends a certain plausibility to this view, but such an explanation would very inadequately account for the passion that glows in the words of such psalms. Again, in the case of the one hundred and ninth Psalm, it has been seriously argued that verses 6-19 represent, not the imprecations of the psalmist upon his foes, but of his foes upon him. Such a subterfuge, which in any case would only be applicable to this psalm, shows at least how grave the difficulty occasioned by these psalms has been felt to be.

The psalms, however, find their real explanation in the situation of the singers and in the ideas of the ancient Jewish world.

(i) It has to be remembered that these psalms are not the spiteful expression of personal enmity. The speaker is the church, and the subjects of his imprecation are the enemies of the church or nation. The curse upon Edom and Babylon, for example, was wrung from embittered hearts by the cruelty of these peoples (137 : 7-9), and the imprecations of the sixty-ninth Psalm are, to say the least, not unintelligible, if, as has been supposed, they were directed against Antiochus Epiphanes, who desecrated the temple (cf. 74 : 3-9).

(ii) Again, it is the cause of God that is at stake when the church is assailed; and, as the speaker is the church, the prayer is that the insult to God may be avenged, rather than any personal injury. This comes out clearly in Psalm 79 : 10-12, where vengeance is denounced upon the heathen, because "they have reviled thee, O Lord." On similar grounds is to be explained the peculiar violence with which Psalms 104 and 139 end. There is no room for the wicked, the psalmist feels, in a world so full of Jehovah's goodness (104); no place for men who are not overawed by the thought of his loving, searching omnipresence (139).

(iii) It is very important, too, to note that the men on whom the curses are to fall are men guilty of cruelty and immorality. Important as context always is, the context of imprecation is peculiarly important. When the "God of vengeance," as Jehovah is called (94 : 1), is appealed to, it is against those who slay the widow and the stranger and murder the fatherless (94 : 6; cf. 59 : 12). From this point of view, the imprecations are only the vehement expression of a passionate belief in the moral order, and a desire to see its consummation hastened.

(iv) Lastly, the confusion of the wicked was a necessary postulate of the psalmist's faith in God. He felt that God was bound to vindicate him—or, if you like, the church—as his representative. If the wicked were to triumph, and the good to be defeated, God would also be

defeated, falling in the fall of his people; and that must not and cannot be. Hence the passionate appeal for vengeance. It is also only fair to remember that imprecations are only very occasionally on the lips of the sufferers; no word of cursing falls from the lips of the greatest sufferer of all (22).

## II

### PSALMS OF VENGEANCE

### 1. *Upon the Brutal and Malignant Foes of Judah* (137)[1]

The Babylonian challenge to sing (1-3)

When the day was done, we sat down by the waters of Babylon, and sought to comfort our exiled hearts with song. But the thought of Jerusalem came upon us and our eyes filled with tears. So we hung our harps again upon the willow-trees. For our ruthless captors called upon us to make sport for them by singing one of the temple[2] songs.

The Jews' refusal (4-6)

Never! How can we sing a song of our own God in the land of another? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, if I count thee not my highest joy, may my right hand wither[3] and

[1] Probably written soon after the return from exile, when the memory of it is still fresh (cf. v. 7).

[2] There is in this Psalm a fine blend of religious and patriotic motive; or, more strictly, to the Jew these were two aspects of the same.

[3] See p. 140 (note).

strike the harp no more! may my tongue cleave to my mouth and never sing again!

From friend and stranger alike we have suffered—from Edom and Babylon. O our God, punish the cruel Edomites who, instead of playing a brother's[1] part, shouted with malicious joy over the downfall of our dear Jerusalem, and wildly urged her assailants to raze the city to her very foundations.[2] Imprecation on Babylon and Edom (7-9)

O Babylon, the cruel![3] Happy the man who shall deal with thee as thou hast dealt with us. Happy the man who shall seize thine infants and dash them against the rocks.

## 2. *Upon Unrighteous Judges* (58)[4]

Ye rulers who claim to rule by right divine,[5] are your sentences just; are your judgments of men impartial? The unjust judges (1-5)

[1] Their ancestors, Isaac and Esau, are represented as brethren.

[2] Cf. Obad. 10 ff.

[3] The possibilities are: (i) she who has been devastated (that is, already as good as devastated—her doom is sealed), or (ii) she who is to be devastated, or (iii) by a change of text, she who devastates.

[4] This psalm and the four following (59, 69, 109, 83) may possibly all com from the Maccabean period, though 58 and 59 at least may well be earlier. The situation in 58 might even be as early as about 600 B. C., when the Babylonians were practically masters of Palestine. It reminds us forcibly of Hab. 1 (cf. vv. 3, 4).

[5] Instead of "in silence," as in R. V., or "O congregation," as in A. V., read "ye gods." There is the same difficulty here as in Psalm 82, which is closely akin to it, in deciding whether by "gods" the tutelary gods of the heathen nations are meant, or more generally rulers; quite probably the for-

Nay, verily, rather your conduct is iniquitous ;[1] it is wrong, and not justice that you dispense with your hands. Your very blood is tainted. You belong to the class who are aliens from God and liars from the very womb, malicious as a venomous snake, or as an adder that bites the skilful snake-charmer, and refuses to listen to his voice.

Prayer for their destruction (6-9)

O my God, crush the teeth in their mouth. Yes, break their lion's teeth. Let them melt away like the running water ; let them be mowed down like the grass.[2] May they vanish, as the snake dissolves on its crawling path ! May they disappear as an untimely birth which the light has never seen ! Yes ! the storm is surely coming ; and before your plans are ripe, they will be scattered to the winds.[3]

Faith in God's justice confirmed (10, 11)

Ah ! that will be a glad day for the righteous, when his eyes are glutted with this feast of vengeance, and he washes his feet in the blood of the wicked ; and then all

mer. But the above paraphrase brings out the essential meaning with sufficient accuracy for the modern reader.

[1] In the land, or in the world, according as we regard the injustice as exercised within the Jewish state only or in the world at large (v. 2).

[2] Probably the original text had nothing to do with "arrows."

[3] The detail of this verse (9), especially the second clause, is exceedingly difficult and obscure. Some render, "Before your pots feel the fire of thorns, he (or it) will sweep them away, both what is raw and what is cooked." The last phrase is hardly possible ; but, at any rate, it must mean more than "in his anger." Duhm suggests "thorns and thistles"—the material for burning is swept away, the fire goes out, and there is an end of the cooking. The meaning in any case is that their plans are frustrated.

will be constrained to confess that the righteous has his reward. Yes, there is indeed a God who judges in the earth.

### 3. *Upon Treacherous and Malignant Foes* (59) [1]

Prayer for deliverance from marauders (1-7)

Set me, O my God, in a place secure from my foes. O save me from those iniquitous and bloodthirsty men. For see what they do. They cunningly seek my life, they insolently band themselves against me, though not, O my God, for any sin or evil that I have done. They run to the attack and prepare to despatch me. O awake, come and see, thou who art far mightier than they—for thou art not only Israel's God, but Lord of Hosts—awake and punish the insolent aliens, and show no pity upon those vile and blasphemous men. In the evening [2] they go about the city, howling like dogs, with their venomous mouths and blasphemous tongues, supposing that Israel's God cannot hear.[3]

Song of gratitude (8-10)

But thou dost hear, O my God, and thou dost meet their blasphemy with laughter and mockery. O thou who

[1] The enemies in this psalm appear to be heathen (v. 5), that is, foreigners (unless indeed, with Duhm we here read "proud"), and therefore (like Ps. 83?) this psalm might be Maccabean. But there are no proper names here, as there, to guide us; and the description of the enemy is sufficiently vague to fit into the period of the struggles with the neighboring peoples, when the Jews, after their return from the exile, were attempting to reconstruct their ecclesiastical and quasi-political life.

[2] V. 6; note the refrain (v. 14).

[3] Cf. 94 : 8, 9.

art my strength,[1] I will sing a song [2] of praise to thee; for Jehovah is my fortress and my gracious God. He will come to my help and feast mine eyes upon mine enemies.

Prayer for the punishment of the marauders (11-15)

Do not destroy them by a speedy doom, for then my people might forget, but send thy heavenly hosts to drive them about [3] in disquietude as the bloody Cain was driven. Give them up, O Lord, to the consequences of their sinful speech; let them be taken in their pride because of the perjury they utter. Consume them in thine anger, consume them utterly, and let it be known to the end of the world that God rules in Israel.[4] In the evening they go about the city howling like dogs, roaming about for something to eat, and growling when they do not get their fill.

Song of gratitude (16-17)

But as for me, I will sing aloud of thy strength, and celebrate thy grace in the morning,[5] for thou hast been a fortress to me, and a refuge in time of distress. O thou who art my strength, I will sing a song of praise to thee; for Jehovah is my fortress and my gracious God.[6]

[1] Note the refrain (v. 17). The form of the refrain here does not agree exactly with the form in v. 17, and a comparison of the passages gives rise to serious textual difficulties. But quite probably the refrain was originally the same in both verses.

[2] Cf. v. 17, more probable than "I will wait for thee."

[3] Or, hurl them down.

[4] Or, rules to the end of the world.

[5] This pure song of religious joy is meant to be contrasted with the howling of the enemies in the night.

[6] Some here supplement the refrain (cf. v. 9, 10a) by adding 10b.

### 4. *Upon Wanton Persecutors* (69)[1]

Prayer for deliverance from wanton enemies (1-6)

Save me, O God, from my deadly peril, for I am sinking in the mire, I cannot keep my feet. I am drowning in deep waters.[2] My throat is hoarse with shouting to thee for help, and mine eyes are weary with looking for my God to save me from the countless enemies who are wantonly seeking my ruin. They demanded of me to restore what I had not taken,[3] and I gave them what they asked. Thou knowest, O my God, that I was foolish and guilty in thy sight, but not of heinous sins. Therefore deliver me: lest the godly who look to thee in hope, O Lord God of Israel, be put to shame and confusion when they see my suffering.

Persecution for religion's sake (7-12)

For it is in thy cause that I have suffered reproach and shame—through my consuming zeal for the temple. The reproaches that are hurled at thee have fallen also on me. I am forsaken even by some among mine own people.[4] When I would chasten my soul with fasting, they insulted me all the more. When I would wear mourning apparel, they mocked me with their taunt-songs, laughing at me

[1] There is a probability, though, of course, by no means a certainty, that the background of this psalm is the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes.

[2] The metaphor changes from a prison-well to the waters of the sea.

[3] Duhm, who believes the speaker to be an individual, not the community, supposes that there may be an allusion here to some indiscretion—perhaps in connection with the temple money (v. 9).

[4] Apostate Jews.

in the city gates, and satirizing me in their drunken songs.

Earnest entreaty (13-18)

But as for me, I pray to thee, O my God, be gracious to me, according to thy manifold mercy, and answer me with thy loyal help. O keep me from sinking, keep my head above the deep waters. Let me not be overwhelmed in the depths. O save me from the dungeon's fate.[1] Hear me, O my God, in thy gracious love, and in thy great pity turn to me. O hide not thy face from thy servant's sore distress, and hear me speedily. Draw near and deliver me.

The psalmist's sufferings (19-21)

For thou knowest how mine enemies despise and revile and dishonor me. My heart is sick and breaking with the insults that I bear. I looked for sympathy and comfort, but there was none anywhere to be found. Instead of soft and soothing speech I was regaled with poisonous and bitter words.

Imprecations upon the foe (22-28)

I pray that the surprises of their own life may be no less grievous. May the peace-offerings at the festal table turn out to be a snare to them.[2] May their eyes be dark and

[1] "Let not the well close her mouth upon me." If c does not simply reflect the thought of a and b, the allusion will be to an experience like that of Joseph or Jeremiah.

[2] V. 22. Wellhausen translates: "May their table become for them a snare, and for the careless a trap." The parallelism is better secured by Duhm, who emends the word rendered "welfare" in A. V. and "peace" in R. V. as "peace-offerings." In any case the word is suggested by the previous verse.

blind; may their loins continually tremble. Pour out thy burning indignation upon them. May their home be a scene of empty desolation, because they have persecuted those whom thou hadst smitten, and added to [1] the sorrows of those whom thou hadst wounded. O heap up their guilt and do not acquit them. Blot out their names from the book in which the names of the citizens of thy kingdom are written.

Song of gratitude (29-33)

But, as for me, thy help, O my God, will lift me above my pain and misery, and I shall yet exalt thy name in a song of praise which is dearer to thee than the sacrifice of brute beasts.[2] The sight of it will gladden the godly, and revive their hearts. For Israel's God listens to the poor, and thinks of those that, for his sake, are languishing in prison.

Ascription of praise for the sure redemption of Zion (34-36)

This deliverance of ours will be fraught with meaning to the whole world. Praise him then, heaven and earth and sea, and all that moves therein; for he saves Jerusalem and builds the ruined cities of Judah and makes of them homes to be held for all time by his servants who love him.

[1] V. 26, so Septuagint, instead of "tell of."

[2] "With horns and hoofs." This may be intended to bring out the idea of beast and the relative unimportance of sacrifice; or it may mean that the beast is conceived as full grown, and of the class counted clean by the law.

## 5. *Upon Bitter Adversaries* (109) [1]

Appeal to Jehovah against the adversary (1-5)

Thou art the God in whom I glory: O be not silent. For with their treacherous tongues the godless have wantonly uttered against me speeches of slander and hate. They reward my love with enmity [2] and my kindness with evil.

Prayer for vengeance upon the adversary (6-20)

May he [3] fall beneath the powerful accusations of some godless adversary.[4] May the issue of his trial be condemnation, and may his prayer for mercy be counted an aggravation of his sin. May his days be few, and may his office [5] be seized by another. May his wife be a widow and his children fatherless, and, driven from their ruined homes, may they wander about as beggars. May creditors snare all that he has, and strangers spoil the fruit of his labor. May there be none to deal with them in love, nor any to favor his fatherless children. May his posterity be annihilated in the next generation. May Jehovah bear in unfading remembrance the sins of his father and mother and visit them on him, and utterly blot out the memory of

[1] This psalm has many points of contact with Psalm 69, and the object of its fierce imprecations may well be Antiochus Epiphanes, though certainty on such a point is impossible.

[2] The phrase "But I am prayer" (v. 4) can hardly be right; but no probable emendation has been suggested.

[3] Probably the chief opponent: in 2-5, 25 the plural is used.

[4] In this context, Satan is probably a common noun, *an* adversary: but it might be a proper noun, *the* adversary (cf. Zach. 3 : 1).

[5] Or property, possessions.

him[1] from the earth, because he showed no pity, but persecuted the poor and needy and faint-hearted even unto death. May he be a stranger to the blessing which he loathed to utter, and may he be smitten by the curses which he loved, till they cling to him like a garment, and bind him like a girdle, and cleave to him like oil upon the skin and pass within him like the awful water of ordeal.[2] Thus may Jehovah reward my slanderous enemies.

Prayer for the singer's own deliverance (21-31)

But, O Jehovah, my Lord, deal with me according to thy gracious love ; for I am poor and needy and wounded in heart. My life is at the eventide, and I am driven away, shaken as one shakes an insect out of a dress. In my sorrow I have fasted till I am faint. My flesh shrivels up, because I have not anointed me with oil.[3] As for me, they insult me and shake their heads derisively when they see me. O help me, save me, O my God, according to thy love, and teach them that this blow which has fallen on me is a stroke of thine own hand. What matter their curses, if only thou bless ? Confound mine enemies and make thy servant glad. Let them be clothed with shame and confusion as with a garment. Then, in the presence of many, I will offer loud and grateful thanks to my God, for in the trial he stands beside the needy, to save him from those that would condemn him.

[1] So two important Greek codices. The Hebrew reads "of them."

[2] Cf. Num. 5 ; 22.

[3] Or, my flesh is losing its fat.

### 6. *Upon Those who would Destroy Judah* (83) [1]

The confederation against Judah (1-8)

O our God, do not remain silent. Speak the word, bestir thyself. For look! thine enemies are storming against thee, lifting up their godless heads, and setting their cunning traps for the people who are dear to thee. "Come," they say, "let us cut them off, that the remembrance of Israel as a nation may be blotted out." With one accord they are in league against thee—the Edomites, Ishmaelites, Moabites, Hagarenes, Gebalenes, Ammonites, Amalekites, Philistines, Tyrians, aided by Syrians.[2]

Prayer for its destruction (9-18)

Deal with them as, in the days of old, thou didst deal, by Kishon's banks, with Sisera and Jabin, who met their miserable doom at Endor.[3] Deal with them as thou didst with the chiefs of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna, who swore that they would seize the land that was thine.[4] O my God, drive them like stubble or chaff before the wind. Let thy whirling storm chase and con-

[1] The situation in 1 Macc. 5 is in astonishing harmony with that of this psalm, most of the peoples named there being also found here. The date would then be about 165 B. C.

[2] Nearly all of these peoples are in the neighborhood of Judæa, southeast or north. Amalek no longer existed. The name probably indicates the region which they had formerly occupied. Gebal stands for the northern part of the Edomitic range. It is not quite certain what people is meant by Assyria: in any case not the Assyrians—probably the Syrians. The children of Lot (v. 8) are the Moabites and Ammonites (Gen. 19 : 37, 38).

[3] Jud. 4, 5.

[4] Jud. 6-8.

found them like the fire that sets forests and wooded hills ablaze. Shame and confusion and ruin eternal be theirs ! that they may learn who and what thou art ; for thou and thou alone, O our God, are the most high God over all the earth.

# THE PENITENTIAL PSALMS

# THE PENITENTIAL PSALMS

## I

### INTRODUCTION

The seven psalms, which for ages have been known to the church as the penitential psalms, are not all strictly penitential in our sense of the word. Several of them have as much to do with the confession of suffering or sorrow as of sin, though occasionally the suffering is connected with the sin as effect with cause. The one hundred and second psalm, for example, is a plaintive cry from the people of Zion whose city is in ruins, and a prayer that, by the grace of the eternal God, their city may yet be restored to glory. Here, as everywhere in the psalms, there are enemies in the background from whose secret or open persecution these psalmists pray to be delivered (38 : 12, 19 f. ; 143 : 3). Even in the one hundred and thirtieth psalm, which is as truly penitential as it is wistfully tender, the weight which bows Israel appears to be as much one of suffering as of sin.

But the sense of sin, though usually mingled with this other sense of suffering, is very real and profound. It excites and prostrates the psalmists, for they know how

innate a thing sin is, and how deadly it will prove, if God do not meet it with his pardoning grace. If Jehovah deals with men as they deserve, no one can be justified (143 : 2), and no one can stand (130 : 3). At certain periods, indeed, the church asserts her own integrity and unswerving fidelity to the law (44 : 17 ff.); but, as a rule, the human spirit[1] is regarded as corrupt and unstable; what the man needs is a new and steadfast spirit (51 : 10).

This he can secure from Jehovah by sincere confession. So long as he continues in sullen silence and refuses to take penitential words upon his lips, he can only pine away under the heavy hand of God (32 : 3, 4). But he enters into the blessedness of forgiveness, the moment he spontaneously confesses (32 : 5). Nay, he does not attain the full stature of his manhood, until of his own free will, he comes to God for pardon and guidance. To wait till he is driven is to behave not like a man but like an animal; it is to show the stupidity of the mule (32 : 9). Sometimes it is the thought of God's doings in the past that encourages the psalmist (143 : 5), sometimes it is the thought that, amid all the flux and sorrow of things, he is eternal and unchangeable (102 : 12, 13); but most of all it is the thought that he is, by his very nature, the God of redemption, and that he has both the will and the power to redeem (130 : 7).

[1] At any rate, the spirit of Israel, and *a fortiori* the human spirit. Cf. the historical psalms (*e.g.*, 78, 106) with their emphasis on Israel's apostasy.

Most, if not all, of the penitential psalms are to be interpreted collectively—quite certainly, for example, Psalm 102 (cf. 130 : 7 *O Israel*, hope in Jehovah). But to say this is in no way to belittle the depth of their spiritual insight, or their power over the modern religious consciousness. The penitence which they express must first have been experienced by the individual conscience, before it took the form of a psalm to be sung by the united church.

To the surprise of those who forget the religious temper and ideas of the ancient world, a curiously discordant note is occasionally struck in some of these "penitential" psalms, as, for example, in the psalm which ends in a prayer for the destruction of those that afflict the psalmist's soul (143 : 12). But, on the whole, the psalms can be appropriated with but little reserve by the Christian Church.

## II

### PSALMS EXPRESSIVE OF PENITENCE

#### 1. *A Cry for Help in Time of Mortal Distress* (6)

Have pity on me and save me from death (1-7)

It is right, O my God, that thou shouldst chastise me ; but chastise me in love, and not in anger. Mercifully heal me, for I am weak and sore, and troubled ; how long, O my God, shall my suffering last ? O come back to me and save me, for thou art pitiful, and rob me not of the

joy of praising thee, by bringing me down to death;[1] for the dead can praise thee no more. I am weary with weeping the livelong night. My bed is wet with tears and mine eyes are worn and haggard with sorrow at the thought of my many oppressors.

The prayer has an immediate and triumphant answer (8-10)

(He turns to them in imagination.) Get ye gone, ye sinners; for my God hath heard my sore weeping, and he will accept my prayer. Ashamed and confounded will all mine enemies be, yea, ashamed and confounded suddenly.

### 2. *A Confession and Prayer for Deliverance* (38)

Inward sufferings because of sin (1-10)

It is right, O my God, that thou shouldst chastise me, but chastise me in love and not in anger,[2] for thou hast smitten me with a sore sickness,[3] and thy hand lies heavy upon me. In thine anger at my sin, thou hast smitten me so sore that there is no health in me. Like billows my sins are gone over my head; they are as a burden too heavy to bear. Because of them, I am tormented with loathsome and festering wounds. I am crushed and cast down, and I go about continually in mourning. My flesh is full of corruption[4] and unsoundness. I am so numb

[1] Or perhaps, "rob thyself not of my praises." It would be quite consonant with ancient Jewish ideas to regard God himself as suffering, when there is no church to praise him.

[2] The psalm begins almost exactly like Psalm 6, and has other points of contact with it, so that they may fairly be considered together. The background of both may be the exile.

[3] Cf. Isaiah 1 : 6.

[4] Or perhaps burning, or shame.

and utterly broken that I cry louder than the lion[1] roars. O Lord, thou knowest what I long for; thou hearest my sighing. My heart beats fast, my strength fails, the light of mine eyes is gone.

My dear ones, my friends and neighbors, stand aloof from me as from a leper. They that thirst for my blood lay their traps, and they that long for my ruin talk of destroying me and brood over treachery all the day long; but I am resigned and submissive, and silent as the innocent lamb. I act as though I heard it not, and suffer no murmur to escape my lips, for my hope is in thee and I know thou wilt answer me, O Lord my God; else they will exult over me, and triumph, should I fall. For I am near the brink of destruction, and grief is mine continually. My guilt I acknowledge and I sorrow for my sin. Many and mighty are those who hate me without a cause,[2] and render me evil for good, because I make good the goal of my life. They have cast me, the beloved one, out, like a corpse abhorred.[3]

Sufferings from enemies without (11-20)

O leave me not, Jehovah, be not far from me, my God. Come and help me, speedily, O Lord my Saviour.

Prayer for deliverance (21, 22)

[1] Lioness: by the addition of a single letter to the Hebrew word for "my heart."

[2] V. 19. For "lively" in the English version, read "causelessly." The difference in Hebrew is slight.

[3] This verse is added in several Greek codices, and must, it would seem, rest ultimately on Hebrew authority.

### 3. *The Joy of Confession and Reconciliation* (32)

The blessedness of forgiveness (1, 2)

O how happy is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How happy is the man who confesses with sincerity! for Jehovah imputes no guilt to him.

The pain of sin unconfessed; the relief of confession (3-5)

So long as my lips were sealed against confession, I wasted away with my ceaseless crying.[1] Day and night thy hand lay heavy upon me; my life was dried up like a brook in the summer heat. But the moment I resolved to confess my sin openly and hide it no more, that moment didst thou remove the guilt thereof.

The blessing open to all who confess (6, 7)

Knowing as I do the joy of forgiveness, I would fain urge every godly one to pray to thee in time of trouble,[2] that he may not be overtaken by the rushing waters. To them, as to me, thou canst be a shelter, preserving them[3] from danger and bringing deliverance[4] on every side.

Divine guidance (8)

There comes to me, too, this assurance from my God: "I will give thee wisdom," he says, "and teach thee henceforward the way thou shouldst go, with my gracious eye steadfastly upon thee."[5]

[1] If the speaker be an individual, the reference will be to sickness and physical pain: if the speaker be the church, these expressions will have to be interpreted metaphorically.

[2] Emended text.

[3] Probably the third person should be read instead of the first.

[4] The text is very hard, and probably corrupt. The word "songs" is unlikely.

[5] So the Greek version: "I will fix mine eyes upon thee."

But, if God is to forgive, men must gladly yield themselves to the discipline divine, nor must they rebel like the senseless brutes, which have to be controlled by bit and bridle, else they cannot be brought nigh. The folly of obstinacy (9)

So the secret of blessedness is trust in God. He whose trust is in him will experience the love of God on every hand, while the godless have sorrows many. Be glad therefore in your God, and rejoice in him, O Israel; yea, shout for very joy. The joy of the righteous (10, 11)

### 4. *A Plea for Forgiveness and Promise of Faithful Service* (51)

Be gracious unto me, O God—for thou art loving and very pitiful—and blot my transgressions out of thy book. Nay, I need cleansing as well as forgiveness: for the mire of sin has defiled my soul. O wash me well and make me clean. Prayer for forgiveness (1, 2)

I pray for thy grace, for full well I know the burden of my sin: it is ever in my thoughts. Not against men indeed have I sinned, but against thee alone, and done that which is displeasing to thee. I acknowledge that thy judgment is just and impartial. I am weak and prone to sin; for such is the nature with which I was born. Grant me that wisdom of heart which leads to the truth that thou lovest to find in men. Cleanse me from the leprosy[1] of sin: wash away my stains till I be clean every whit. Confession and entreaty (3-12)

[1] Hyssop was used in the cleansing of the leper.

Then, with sin forgiven, may it be mine to hear glad cries of joy sent up by the members of my broken body.[1] O forgive and forget my sin, look not upon it, blot it out of thy book. Cleanse and forgive and create me anew; for a clean heart is thy creation. Create such a heart for me, O God, and plant within me a new and steadfast spirit. Deny me not thy presence: take not from me thy spirit of revelation. Give me again the joy which once I knew ere I forfeited it through sin—the joy of knowing that thou art helping and saving me. Support me with the spirit which readily wills and does that which is good.

Vow of service (13-14)

Then shall I be fit to be thy missionary servant, teaching the heathen thy ways, and turning the godless to thee. O Jehovah, the God who canst save me, if thou do but save me from the deadly perils which beset me on every side, I will celebrate thy faithfulness in a ringing song.

The true sacrifice (15-17)

If thou, O Lord, do but open the lips which sorrow has closed,[2] I will use them to declare thy praise; and my thank-offering I will render in song, for animal sacrifice thou dost not desire.[3] The sacrifice that thou desirest is a broken spirit; and the heart that is crushed thou dost love, O God.

[1] Is the speaker an individual or the church? This verse would be very intelligible, if the speaker were Israel (cf. v. 13), in exile (cf. v. 18: also Ps. 38 and especially 102, where the same figure of a sick body, with allusion to "bones" (vv. 3-5), is found in a psalm undoubtedly collective).

[2] Cf. 137 : 4.

[3] Cf. 40 : 6; 50 : 9-14.

Now hear my prayer, O Lord, for the holy city and temple. According to thy grace, remember for good the temple on Zion's holy hill; and build up the broken walls of Jerusalem; and in those glad days, when we can worship thee once more, thou wilt accept the sacrifices prescribed by the law.[1] Prayer for the temple and city (18, 19)

### 5. *An Appeal to Jehovah to Pity and Restore His People* (102)

Give ear, O my God, to my cry for help. O graciously look and listen, and speedily answer my cry. For my days pass like smoke, and I am like a man that is sick. It is as if my bones were burning with fever heat, and my heart withering like grass beneath the fierce sunshine. I have forgotten to take to me nourishment. My sorrow has so wasted me that my bones stare out. In our desolate city I am lonely as an owl among ruins, singing my sleepless lament like a bird all by itself upon the housetop. The enemy hurl at me ceaselessly their insane reproaches, and use my name for a curse—so glaring is my misery, with ashes for bread and tears for drink; and it is thy fierce anger that has brought me to this pass, catching me up like the whirlwind, and then hurling me down The sorrows of Israel (1-11)

[1] It is a mooted point whether the last two verses are integral to the psalm or not. If they are, they would go a long way to show that the psalm was, from the first, a "collective" psalm; but some suppose that they were added, to adapt an originally personal psalm to the use of the congregation.

to the ground. The shadows are long. I am in the evening of my days, and I wither away like grass.

Appeal to the eternal Jehovah to have pity on Zion (12-15)

But thou, O my God, dost not wither. Through all the ages thou dost abide upon thy throne forever. O come thyself. Rise and take pity on Zion, and show her thy favor ere it is too late, for the hour is already come ; and thy servants love her so very dearly—her very ruins are dear. O come and save her, and the sight of a restored Jerusalem will lead all the nations with their rulers to acknowledge thy glory and to worship thee.

Vision of the days of restoration (16-22)

For Jehovah, in pity for the prayer of the desolate, will assuredly reveal his glory by rebuilding Jerusalem. Let this prophecy be written down, for it will surely be fulfilled, and later generations will praise Jehovah's faithfulness. For on the heavenly heights he is not unmindful, but he looks down upon the earth to listen to the moan of prisoners doomed to death and to set them free ; that, in the golden Messianic age, when the nations assemble to worship Jehovah, the story of his praise may be told in Jerusalem.

Prayer to the eternal Jehovah to establish Israel forever (23-28)

But the glory of those days fades again before my present misery. I am like a weary traveller, with strength weakened and days cut short—and Jehovah has done it. O my God, cut me not off in the midst of my days that are all too few ; for thou art eternal. Long ago didst thou create the earth and the heavens. They shall perish, but thou dost stand : they shall wear out and be changed

like a garment. But as for thee, thou art ever the same, and thy years are endless; and in thine own good time thou shalt surely establish thy servants forever in their city, with the steady light of thy favor upon them evermore.

### 6. *A Prayer for Pardon and Restoration* (130)

Out of the depths of our[1] distress we cry to thee, our God, who art throned on high. Give very earnest heed, O Lord, to our loud entreaty. For if thou shouldst continue to remember our sins, we should all, O Lord, be doomed to destruction. But thou canst forgive, and by thy forgiveness thou winnest men to worship thee. Prayer from the depths for forgiveness (1-4)

Earnestly do we wait, O our God, hoping in thy promise of forgiveness and deliverance from distress. We wait for the Lord more than the weary watchmen wait for the morning. Confident expectation (5-8)

Hope, O Israel, in thy God, for with him is the love and the will and the power to redeem; and Israel he will surely redeem from all her sins and sorrows.

### 7. *A Cry for Deliverance and Guidance* (143)

In thy faithfulness and love, I beseech thee, my God, give ear to my earnest supplication, and enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight can no living Humble and anguished prayer based upon Jehovah's ancient goodness (1-6)

[1] Vv. 7, 8 put it beyond doubt that the speaker in this psalm is not an individual, but the community.

thing be justified. Hear me in love, for the enemy has persecuted me and crushed my life down to the ground, and constrained me to make my home in the darkness,[1] like the dead that cannot rise again, so that my spirit faints and my heart is numb. In my despair, I bethink me of the days of old, and longingly brood over all that thou then didst do, and I stretch out my hands in prayer for thy blessing, yearning for it as the thirsty land yearns for the rain.

Prayer for deliverance, instruction and triumph (7-12)

O answer me speedily, my God, for my spirit is fainting; hide not thy face from me, or I shall be like them that go down to the grave. After the night of sorrow, let thy mercy dawn upon me. My trust is in thee, and to thee I lift up my soul, to thee I flee. O deliver me, then, from my foes, and show me the path to take, and teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God. Let thy good spirit guide me on a smooth and level way. O bring me out of my distress, and in thy faithfulness restore me to life again for thy name's sake, and, in thy love, destroy mine enemies every one, for I am thy servant.

[1] Whether prison or misfortune is not clear.

# THE PSALMS OF PETITION

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## I

### INTRODUCTION

It is not unnatural that the psalms of petition should constitute the largest group in our division of the Psalter. For in the psalms men speak to God, and the most natural and perhaps most frequent speech of men to God is the speech of entreaty. On the loftier heights of experience and in the more exalted moods of the spirit, songs of adoration may be raised to him; but men to whom life is a daily battle and a hope deferred, wrestle with God—if they believe in him at all—and tell him their sorrow, and speak to him as a man to his friend: or, when a less impulsive mood is on them, they lift up meek eyes to him who dwelleth in the heavens, and humbly beseech him to be gracious (123).

The psalmists were, most of them, men who had drunk deep of sorrow. Theirs was a lot of fightings within and wars without. As a whole, the psalms breathe an atmosphere of conflict; they are the words of men whose heart was often sore, and whose life was sometimes in peril. It

is seldom possible to make out with any precision who the enemies were of whose malicious presence they so often and so bitterly complain. Sometimes we think we can see lurking behind the words, which for us are all too vague, the figures of the Samaritans, the Arabians, and the other neighbors who thwarted so persistently Judah's efforts to re-establish her ecclesiastical life in early post-exilic times (31); sometimes we can be tolerably sure who those unfeeling heathen were, that trampled upon Jewish customs, desecrated the temple and martyred the faithful (79). Plainly enough, the sorrow is often far larger than an individual sorrow; it sometimes rises out of the depths of some great national humiliation (cf. Pss. 44 and 60). But, whoever the enemies be from whom the psalmists pray to be delivered, they are assuredly no phantom figures, but painful and provoking realities, men of violence and arrogance, with cunning dispositions, sharp tongues, and sometimes swords as sharp.

To the psalmists, both the commoner and the rarer tragedies of life are familiar. They know the pang of kindness rejected and friendship betrayed (41 : 9; 55 : 12-14). They live in a world devoid of love and loyalty (12 : 1); and they are sometimes rewarded for their own fidelity to the cause of religion by the cruel horrors of persecution (79 : 3). The men who sing to us in the psalms are men whose eyes may soon be closed in the darkness of death (13 : 3; cf. 88 : 5). They know too well the vanity

of human help. They know that whether they look on the right hand or the left there is none to care; but they are just as sure that Jehovah cares (142 : 4, 5).

It is instructive and almost exhilarating to watch how rays of light flash ever and anon through the psalmists' darkness; or we might more truly say, how the darkness is pierced by a mild yet steady light, which not seldom shines so brightly as to chase it all away. For, as the darkness and the light are both alike to God, so the psalmists, each in his own measure, tasted something of that divine superiority to the chances and changes of human fortune.

> "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast,
> I will sing and play" (57 : 7).

They are not afraid though the mountains be torn up by the roots and flung unto the sea (46 : 2). If only Almighty God is with them, how can flesh harm them (56 : 4)? So with quiet hearts they lie down amid perils; they sleep, and awake refreshed, sustained by the God who never slumbers or sleeps (3 : 5, 6; 121 : 4).

In hours of dejection they remind themselves of the power he displayed in creation (74 : 12 ff.), or at the conquest of Canaan (44 : 3), and they know that he is a God of love as well as of power. He is the shepherd of Israel (80 : 1), the God of infancy and the God of age (22 : 9, 10; 71 : 9, 18) who tenderly and sleeplessly

watches over his people (121 : 4), and whose inmost nature is love. With special delight do the psalmists recall the ancient revelation of their God as "full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth" (Exod. 34 : 6; Ps. 86 : 15; 103 : 8); and to this love, in the last resort, they can always make a confident appeal, for it is the most fundamental thing in the nature of God. It was his love for Israel that launched and sustained her upon her unique career; and that love was again and again confirmed in the great crises of her history (cf. 46). So, whether the prayer of the psalmists be for forgiveness or guidance or vindication in the eyes of the world—a vindication which sometimes assumes the unlovely form of a desire for vengeance (35 : 5, 6; 59 : 11-13)—they always look with confidence to him.

They approach him either as humble penitents (51) or as men with a good conscience (7 : 4; 17 : 1-4); and though, with their limited outlook upon another world, they are eager and all but clamorous to have their wrongs righted and their cause vindicated in this, and though the blessings for which they pray are often of a material sort, there are many who have mounted to the higher uplands of the spiritual life and whose dearest satisfaction is to have the gracious face of God shining upon them (4 : 6). God was to the psalmists a tremendous reality, more real than the enemies who vexed and the doubts which perplexed them. For, though they sometimes cried "How

long?" they never allowed themselves long to forget that these things were but for a little time, while their God was on his throne, unchangeable and eternal (102 : 27); and behind and beneath the yearning for material satisfaction and earthly vindication was the inextinguishable thirst for him (42 : 1, 2).

## II

### PRAYERS FOR DELIVERANCE, PRESERVATION, OR RESTORATION [1]

#### 1. *For Protection from Active Foes* (3)[2]

God can help the helpless (1-4)

Many there are, O my God, that vex and oppose me; many imagine that God cannot help me. But thou, the great God of Israel, *thou* art not impotent. Thou dost on all sides defend me. Thou dost bring me to honor and lift up my head. Often and loudly I have called to Jehovah, and he always sends answer from his temple hill.

May he help as he has done before (5-8)

So, with the assurance of his protection in my heart, I laid me down and fell quietly asleep, and slept till the morn a sleep unbroken, for Jehovah sustained me all the time; and in his keeping I fear not the hosts that ring me

[1] The situation in most of these psalms is too indeterminate to make it worth while to hazard a guess at their origin or date. Many of them appear to be collective psalms.

[2] A morning prayer.

round. For, though these godless foes of mine long, like wild beasts, to devour me with their cruel teeth, thou canst crush them, as in days gone by. O arise, and help me, then, my God, for thou canst help; and with that help bless not myself alone, but all thy people.

### 2. *For Protection against Slander* (4)[1]

Prayer for help (1)

O God, who defendest my cause, answer my prayer when I call. As, in days gone by, thou hast brought me out of straits into a roomy place, so now this night be graciously pleased to hear my prayer.

Appeal to the faint-hearted slanderers (2-5)

How long is mine honor to be stained[2] by slanders that have no foundation? Rest assured that Jehovah is thinking of me. He has shown me a special mark of his favor in answering my prayers.[3] Be afraid, if ye please; but commit not the sin of uttering your terror aloud. Be quiet and still. Offer the proper sacrifices, put your trust in Jehovah and all will be well.

The singer's joy in God (6-8)

There are many faint-hearted ones, who ask, "Will ever fortune smile on us again?" Have they forgotten the priestly blessing?[4] Have they forgotten that all is well when Jehovah shines upon us with his gracious face? Yes, that is joy indeed. The gladness which thou hast

[1] An evening prayer.

[2] The Greek version reads, "how long (shall ye be) heavy-hearted."

[3] Cf. Jer. 15 : 1; Job 42 : 8.

[4] Num. 6 : 24-26.

put into my heart, O my God, is more, far more, than the gladness of the harvest home. So in peace I will lay me down and fall asleep without a thought or care, for it is thou, my God, alone that makest me to dwell securely.

### 3. *For a Judgment which is Just* (7)

Confession of innocence (1-5)

In thee is my refuge, O Jehovah, my God, save me from all my persecutors, who, like wild beasts, would fain tear me alive, while there is none to save me. O Jehovah my God, I protest mine innocence, and am ready to die, if I speak not the truth. If my hands are stained with wickedness, if I have been false to my friendships, or if I have even vexed[1] my wanton oppressors, then may my foes hunt me down and destroy me, trampling my life to the earth, and laying mine honor in the dust.

Prayer that Jehovah would publicly defend his cause (6-9)

Arise, O God, and vindicate mine innocence before the world. Arise in hot anger against mine opponents, and at the judgment which thou hast appointed, awake for me. On that day let all the peoples of the world gather round about thee, and sit[2] thou above them upon thy high throne;

[1] It is hardly possible to follow the English version in taking 4b as a parenthetical clause; it is more naturally regarded as co-ordinate with the preceding clause. But in that case the word seems too strong for the situation, whether we render it "oppress," or, by a transposition of the consonants, "plunder." The general sense, however, is clear. Ewald supposes that two clauses may have been lost.

[2] "Sit" instead of "return" by a probable change (v. 27). The difference between the Hebrew words is slight.

and, while thou dealest judgment to all, remember, Jehovah, the innocence which is mine, and judge me thereby. Grant that the wickedness of the ungodly may come to an end; but do thou defend and establish the just. For thou thyself art just; thou canst rightly read the innermost heart of man, and thou knowest the hearts that are true.

The certainty of God's just judgments (10-17)

Therefore I am sure that thou wilt defend and save me. Thou art a judge who is righteous—a mighty God, ever ready sternly to punish wrong. But look! mine enemy is preparing again for the fray. He [1] is sharpening his sword again, his bow is bent and ready—yes, ready for his own destruction, though he knows it not. His deadly weapons and fiery shafts [2] shall compass only his own ruin. Look at his folly—his laborious and malicious toil shall miscarry; not only miscarry, but recoil upon himself—caught like the huntsman in the pit he had dug for his prey, or smitten by the stone that he himself had hurled.

Jehovah hath championed my cause in the judgment, I will therefore render him thanks and sing praise to his name, for he is God most High.

[1] That is, the wicked. As in the immediate context, the wicked is the subject, it seems better to assume that it is he, and not God, who whets his sword in this verse.

[2] Such as were used to set houses or besieged cities on fire.

### 4. *For Protection against Deceitfulness* (12)

Help, O my God, for the good and the faithful are vanished from the world. Men lie to one another with words that are fair out of hearts that are false. May Jehovah destroy those lying and arrogant lips which say, "Our tongue is our strength, our lips are our allies; we own no lord."

Prayer for deliverance from the abounding insincerity (1-4)

My God has a word to match the word of these proud lips. "Because the needy are crushed," he says, "and the poor are made to groan, I myself will arise and show myself the saviour of them that are mocked and despised."[1]

Jehovah's hope-inspiring promise (5-8)

This reassuring word, uttered by a prophet of Jehovah,[2] comforts and strengthens my soul; for it is a word that is sure of fulfilment, precious and pure as silver seven times refined. It gives me the confidence that thou, O Jehovah, wilt guard and preserve us[3] from this evil age and for evermore, even though the godless strut about, and the worthless are in places of authority.[4]

[1] The precise meaning of 5c is uncertain. "I will set him in safety at whom men snort," or "in the safety for which he longs," or (Wellhausen) "Whoso longs for me, him will I place out of danger." Baethgen: "I will (gloriously) appear to him."

[2] Cf. Isaiah 33 : 10.

[3] Or, them (cf. v. 5 : Hebrew "him").

[4] V. 8 is exceedingly obscure. Cheyne and Wellhausen transpose the last two verses. Baethgen renders: "Though the godless let themselves go, in the vineyard despised of men" (that is, Israel)—somewhat forced and unsatisfactory, in spite of the familiar comparison of Israel to a vineyard.

### 5. *For God's Manifestation of Himself* (13)

Passionate prayer for deliverance (1-4)

O my God, thou art forgetting me continually; how long, O tell me, how long wilt thou refuse to look upon me? How long is my soul to be troubled[1] and my heart to be sorrowful every day? How long am I to be under the heel of mine enemy? O my God, look down and listen to my prayer. My eyes are growing dim; lighten them with thy light, lest they soon be dark in death, and then my foes would claim the victory for themselves, and be glad at my discomfiture.

Confidence in the divine answer (5-6)

But, as for me, I have no fear. In thy love do I put my trust. I know that thou wilt save me, and then, with glad heart,[2] I shall praise in song thine exceeding goodness to me.

### 6. *For Deliverance from Insolent Foes* (17)

An assertion of innocence (1-5)

Listen, O my God, to the cry of innocence; hearken to the prayer of my guileless lips. Decide thou my cause, for thine eyes see truly—they see what I am. When thou comest to me in the stillness of the night, and dost prove and try my heart, thou findest no evil thought there; and not in thought alone, but in word and deed alike my life is pure. My lips have not transgressed, and I have kept

[1] In v. 2a, read "pains" instead of "plans," by a change as slight in the Hebrew as the English.

[2] In contrast with the gladness of his enemies (v. 4).

me from the ways of the violent;[1] and my feet have trodden unswervingly in thy paths.

Appeal to Jehovah to save from the cruelty of the enemy (6-12)

In mine innocence I call upon thee, O God. I know that thou wilt hear, for thou hearest those who trust thee. Show me in answer thy wondrous lovingkindness, thou who savest from their adversaries those who put their trust in thy strong hand. Keep me in thy tenderest care, and cover me with thy protection. Preserve me from the ungodly who do me violence, and from the deadly enemies who gather about me; for they are very cruel. They have closed their hearts to pity, they vex me with their insolent words, they dog my steps, they gather round me. They earnestly aim to bring me to the earth[2]—cruel as a lion lurking in ambush for his prey.

Prayer for deliverance from worldly men (13, 14)

Rise, O my God, and meet them face to face. Fell them to the earth, and set me free. Save me by thy sword[3] from the wicked; save me by thy hand, O my God, from worldly men with their lives secure, and their maws well filled—who leave what they have to their children.[4]

[1] Vv. 3c, 4 are very difficult and confused. Duhm emends and translates: "My mouth does not transgress, at thy doing I am still, I have taken heed to the words of my lips, my steps have held fast to the ways of a Pharisee." Wellhausen (3c, 4a): If I think evil, it passes not out of my mouth into act. I have held fast to the law thou hast uttered."

[2] Baethgen translates, "to break into the land" (*i.e.*, a foreign enemy assails Palestine)—not very probable.

[3] Difficult and possibly corrupt.

[4] Most commentators interpret v. 14 as a prayer that the vengeance upon the wicked continue till the third generation; but it seems in the context more like a description of the wicked.

The psalmist's joy in God (15)

I know of a joy that is sweeter far; and mine it shall be to behold thy face, with mine innocence vindicated; and on the morrow, when I awake, I shall be satisfied with the vision of thee.[1]

### 7. *For Deliverance from Enemies* (25)[2]

Prayer for protection, guidance and pardon (1-7)

O my God, I lift up my soul in confidence to thee, and, as I trust in thee, put me not to shame before mine enemies, and do not give them the victory over me. Nay, I know that thou wilt not put to shame any who wait upon thee, but only those who wantonly disown thee. O my God, teach me thy ways and guide me in the paths of thy law, for thou art the God who savest me—I wait for thee all the day long. Remember, O my God, the pity and the love that thou didst show in the olden time; do not recall, I beseech thee, the sins of my youth;[3] but in love remember thou me, for thy goodness' sake.

The love of God (8-14)

Good and upright is Jehovah; therefore he shows the

[1] This verse is exceedingly hard, and many interpretations have been suggested. There is a danger of reading both too much and too little into it. The chief proposals have been to refer the waking to the resurrection, or to waking from the sleep of misfortune, and to interpret the seeing of God's face as equivalent to visiting the temple (cf. Is. 6). The last suggestion, though it may seem meagre, cannot be pronounced impossible in the light of passages like 42 : 2; 84 : 7 (Greek version).

[2] An alphabetic psalm, with no particular sequence of thought.

[3] The sins of the wilderness, and, generally, of the early history. The psalm is most naturally interpreted as a collective psalm: notice the numerous plurals, vv. 3, 8, 9, etc., and cf. v. 22.

way to wanderers. He guides the humble rightly and teaches them his way. With all who keep his laws Jehovah deals evermore in a spirit of faithful love. Because thou art a pitiful God, O pardon my sin, which is great. Jehovah will teach the man who fears him the way he should choose. He himself will enjoy prosperity, and those who come after him will possess the land. Jehovah reveals the purposes of his covenant to those who fear him.

Prayer for deliverance (15-21)

Mine eyes are ever fixed upon my God, for my deliverance will come from him. Graciously look upon me, for I am crushed and lonely. Remove[1] the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Look upon my trouble and affliction, and all my sins forgive. See how many are my foes and how cruelly they hate me. O preserve me, save me, put not my faith to shame. Let mine honor and innocence preserve me, for I wait on thee.[2]

### 8. *For Deliverance from Extreme Distress* (31)

Confident prayer for deliverance (1-8)

O my God, let not my confidence in thee be put to shame. Hear me, for thou art faithful, and save me

[1] By the change of a letter. The text is usually interpreted, "Give room to my distressed heart." Baethgen: "distresses assail my heart."

[2] V. 22: "O God, redeem Israel out of all her distresses." The presence of the word "God" instead of "Jehovah" (see p. 18), and the fact that the alphabet is already exhausted in v. 21, combine to make us believe that this verse is a later addition, cf. 34 : 22. But it proves that, at any rate by the time the verse was added, if not from the beginning, the psalm was interpreted collectively.

speedily. Be unto me as a rock and a fortress to shelter me. Yea, I know that thou art indeed my rock and fortress, and that, for thine own name's sake, thou wilt lead me and guide me with a shepherd's care, and deliver me from the traps which they have cunningly set for me; for thou art my defender. Into thy strong hands, then, I commit my life, and thou dost in thy faithfulness redeem me. Those who worship [1] vain idols thou hatest; but I have a glad and happy faith in thee. For I know that in thy kindness thou wilt look upon my misery, and take pity upon the distress of my soul, and bring me out to a place where there is room, and preserve me from the power of the foe.

**The suppliant's distress (9-13)**

O have mercy upon me, for I am in distress; body and soul are wasting away with grief. In sorrow and sighing my years are spent. In my misery [2] my strength is failing, and my body is wasting away. My neighbors oppress me and mock me, and my friends are afraid of me. At the sight of me in the streets, men flee as from a leper. They forget me as if I were dead. I am worthless as

[1] In the word shōmerîm, those who *regard* idols (cf. Jonah 2 : 8), some have seen an allusion to the Samaritans, which, though not demonstrable, would be quite in the spirit of Hebrew word-play. In that case, the "fortified city" in v. 21 (if the text is correct, which is by no means certain) would probably be Jerusalem about the time of Nehemiah.

[2] This translation rests on the Septuagint. The difference between this and the reading of the Hebrew text, "by reason of my sin," is very slight. The thought involved in the Hebrew text is, of course, a common Old Testament thought.

a vessel that the potter casts aside. Whisperings reach my ears of their cruel secret plots against my life, and terrors are on every side.

Prayer for the destruction of foes (14-18)

But, as for me, my trust is in thee, O my God. I confess my faith in thee. My destiny is in thy hands. O save me from the persecution of my foes. Let the light of thy gracious face shine upon thy servant, and help me in thy love. O put not to shame thy servant who trusts thee, but put to shame the godless, and bring their proud and lying lips to the silence of the grave.

Jehovah's kindness to his people (19-24)

O how manifold is the blessing thou hast treasured up for those who fear thee : nay, openly before all the world thou hast bestowed it on those who put their trust in thee. Thou wilt hide them far away from the tongues of contention and slander. O blessed be Jehovah, for his love to me has been wonderful in the time of distress.[1] As for me, I had rashly thought I was cast out of thy presence ; but thou hast listened to my earnest cry for help. O love Jehovah, all ye that are his, for he preserveth the faithful ;[2] but the arrogant he richly requites. O let your hearts be brave and strong, all ye that wait upon Jehovah.

[1] There are textual and contextual difficulties in the abrupt reference to the besieged, or rather fortified, city (v. 21) ; and Wellhausen's suggested emendation, embodied in the above paraphrase, is worth serious consideration.

[2] Or, keepeth faith (that is, with the good).

## 9. *For Deliverance from Malicious Foes* (35)

The psalmist's prayer to Jehovah to confound his enemies (1-10)

O my God, come to the fray and help me. Fight with those that fight with me. Seize shield and buckler. Arise and help me. Draw spear and battle-axe.[1] Face my persecutors and give me the assurance that thou wilt help me. Shame and confusion be upon them that seek to destroy me: shame and defeat upon all who are scheming to ruin me. As chaff before the wind may they vanish, driven away by Jehovah's angel; dark and slippery be their way, with his angel driving them on.[2] For without cause they sought to entrap me cunningly; and my prayer is that they be caught in their own trap, overtaken by a swift and unexpected doom. Then shall I rejoice and be glad in the God who saves me. Yea, with my whole being I shall praise thee as the matchless Saviour, who delivers his poor crushed servants from the hands of the robbers.

His tender sympathy with them in their misfortune (11-18)

False witnesses arose and demanded restitution of that which I had never taken. They returned me evil for good, making desolate my soul.[3] Far other was my treatment of them. When they were sick, I fasted and wore

[1] This seems better than to regard the word rendered "battle-axe" as a verb, meaning "block the way" (v. 3).

[2] Clauses 5b and 6b have possibly been transposed.

[3] The phrase is difficult (12b). Literally: "childlessness for my soul." Wellhausen renders: "Comfortless is my soul." Cheyne: "Bereavement is come to my soul." Duhm emends and translates, "Laying traps for my soul."

mourning apparel, and prayed for them, with head bent low upon my bosom. I went about robed in black, and bowed as for a dead kinsman—nay, mourning even as a mother mourns.[1] But when calamity came upon me, strangers,[2] whom I did not know at all, gleefully gathered together and assailed me with their railing impious words, mocking and mocking continually,[3] and gnashing upon me with their teeth. How long, O Lord, wilt thou look silently on? Rescue my lonely soul from the roaring[4] lions, and I will publicly praise thee in the great congregation.

Prayer for deliverance (19-28)

O forbid that those who wantonly oppose me should look at me with eyes of malicious delight. For it is not peace that they speak concerning the quiet in the land; they cherish treacherous purposes against them. With open mouths they shout, "Hurrah! Hurrah! At last we have seen the end of them." But, O my God, thou too canst see. Speak and draw near me. Awake, arise, my God and my Lord. Declare me innocent—for thou art just—and put an end to their malicious joy, so that they may no more shout, "Hurrah! We have got the

[1] Or, as one mourns for his mother.

[2] There is much doubt about the meaning of this word (in 15b) and even the correctness of the text. Possibly we should emend, as above, to "strangers," by the addition of a single letter. But even this is not very satisfactory in the context.

[3] The text of 16a is exceedingly obscure, and almost certainly corrupt.

[4] In 17b, "destructions" emended by Olshausen to "roaring" (lions).

desire of our hearts ; we have swallowed him up." Shame and confusion be upon them that rejoice at my calamity, and haughtily lift themselves up against me. But may those who love my cause yet have reason to sing songs of gladness, saying, "Great be Jehovah, whose heart's desire is for the welfare of his servant." Then evermore my tongue shall utter its praise of thy kindness.

### 10. *For Healing and Vindication* (41)

Blessed are the merciful (1-3)

" Happy are all who consider the weak; in the day of their misfortune Jehovah will save their lives and preserve them from the rage of their foes, and give them happiness upon the land. When they are sick, he watches by their bed, and tends them and eases their pain.

The malice of the enemy (4-9)

With all my soul I pray that this happiness may be mine : graciously heal the sufferings of thy sinful servant, and disappoint mine enemies who cruelly long for the day of my death and the extinction of my name. Sometimes they visit me, the hypocrites, with their false tongues and their foul hearts ; and then they go straight out and talk about me, whispering together and thinking in their cruel hearts, " Some malignant disease is upon him ; now that he is down, he will never be up again." Yes, my bosom friends, my very dependents, have rewarded my love with disdain.

Prayer for victory and vengeance (10-12)

But, O my God, do thou in thy mercy raise me up again, that I may give them what they deserve ; and thus,

with mine enemies balked, I shall know that thou art pleased with me. As for me, thou upholdest me because of mine innocence, and dost suffer me to stand in thy presence forever.

### 11. *For Deliverance from Determined and Malicious Enemies* (64)

Hear my lament, O God, for I am in deadly peril; save me from the enemies who affright me. Put me beyond the reach of their secret counsels and deliver me from their boisterous clamor—wicked and iniquitous mob as they are—for they wage war upon the godly with their sharp tongues, from which they launch their bitter words like arrows against the innocent, shooting at them secretly and suddenly and without restraint of conscience. They strengthen each other's hands, and discuss their vile and treacherous plans, thinking no one will ever see them. Yes, in their corrupt and crafty hearts,[1] they skilfully lay their cunning, diabolic plans. Prayer for deliverance from malicious enemies (1-6)

But God, too, has his arrows, and with a swift, sudden shot he will wound them and bring them to such utter ruin for their cruel words,[2] that all who see them shall God's judgment upon them (7-10)

[1] 6b is probably corrupt, and has to be emended on the basis of Jer. 17 : 9. If "deep" be not altered to "deceitful," at any rate it seems necessary to alter "man" to "incurable"—the two words being much alike in the Hebrew. (The heart is incurable, and the thought profound or deceitful).

[2] 8a is very difficult and obscure, and the above paraphrase is only provisional.

wag their heads in astonishment; and every one shall be afraid when they consider what Jehovah has done, and shall tell the story of the divine vengeance. But the righteous shall be glad in him; they shall trust and make their boast in him.

### 12. *For Deliverance from Watchful Foes* (71)

Prayer—based upon past mercies—for deliverance from cruel enemies (1-13)

O my God, never let my confidence in thee be put to shame.[1] Hear me—for thou art faithful—and save me. Be unto me as a rock and a fortress[2] to shelter me. Yea, I know that thou art indeed my rock and fortress. Save me, then, O my God, from the cruel grasp of the ungodly, for I hope in thee. O Lord, my God, I have trusted in thee since my youth. It was thou who didst bring me out of the womb,[3] and on thee have I leaned and in thee have I hoped[4] continually since the day of my birth. I have suffered so sorely that many look upon me as a monster: but thou hast ever been my strong refuge, my mouth is[5] ever full of thy praise and glory. Now that I am old and my power is spent, O leave me not nor cast me off, as my deadly enemies fancy thou hast done; for in their secret conclaves they say, "His god has left him;

[1] Vv. 1-3 = 31 : 1-3.

[2] Emend 3a in accordance with 31 : 2b.

[3] V. 6, cf. 22 : 10.

[4] In 6c, instead of "my praise (shall be)," read perhaps by a very slight change, "my *hope* (has been)."

[5] V. 8; or it may be a wish, "may my mouth be . . ."

let us chase him and seize him, for there is none to help him." O be not far from me, O my God, come and help me speedily.[1] Bring shame and confusion and disgrace upon those who hate me and seek my ruin.

Song of praise in prospect of an assured answer (14-24)

But, as for me, I will wait patiently and gladly for thee, praising thee more and more, telling continually the story of thy countless deeds of victory. In the strength[2] of the Lord my God, I come and celebrate thy righteousness, even thine alone. By thy goodness to me thou hast taught me to praise thee from my earliest days, and I have ever been ready to tell the story of thy wondrous kindness. O continue thy love till I am old and gray,[3] and leave me not, and I will tell to coming generations the story of thy mighty power. A wondrous tale it is; for there is none like thee, Jehovah: thou doest great things, thy power and thy righteousness reach high heaven. Trouble enough thou hast indeed caused me to see, but thou wilt revive me again, and lift me out of the depths, increasing mine honor and restoring me to comfort once again; and, O my God, I will acknowledge thy faithfulness in praise upon the harp and cithern, thou Holy One of Israel. With

[1] V. 12 : cf. 38 : 21, 22.

[2] So the Greek version; or the meaning may be, "I will sing the praises of thy *mighty deeds*."

[3] There is no contradiction between vv. 18 and 9, if we assume that the psalm is collective, as it most probably is (cf. the plurals in 20, R. V.). For the "youth" of the nation, cf. 129 : 1, 2; for its "age" and even "gray hairs," cf. Hos. 7 : 9 (cf. pp. 26, 27).

my lips and with my heart, I will sing thy praise as my redeemer, and I shall never cease to speak of thy righteous love in appointing to shame and confusion all who seek my ruin.

### 13. *For Preservation as of Old* (77)

Sore distress (1-3)

With a loud voice I cry to my God in the assurance that he will hear me. In my distress I seek the Lord, praying in the night with outstretched hands unceasingly; but my soul refuses to be comforted. The thought of God makes me sigh and covers my spirit with gloom.

Appeal to God to pity, as he had done in the past (4-10)

When, troubled and speechless, I sleep not in the night, I think of the days of old, communing with mine own heart, and I ask myself whether the Lord is going to cast us off forever, and be gracious no more. In his anger will he utterly forget his mercy and his faithfulness, and close his heart to pity? Ah! this it is that wounds me, I said,—that the right hand of the most High is no longer the same.[1]

Jehovah's love as revealed in the miracles of Israel's early history (11-20)

But I will call to mind the wonders which thou hast done in the days of old, and deeply ponder them. Ah! then[2] thy way was majestic, thou hadst no peer among the gods; for thou wast a God who did marvels, thou didst show thy power in the world in the redemption of thy

[1] In v. 10, instead of "the *years* of the right hand of the most High," it is better to translate "the *change*," etc.

[2] At the exodus.

people by thy strong arm. No sooner did the waters see thy dread form than they were troubled, and quivered to their depths. Torrents fell from the black clouds, thunders rolled in the heavens, lightning arrows sped to and fro. The thunders rumbled, the lightning lit up the trembling world. In the waters of the storm thy path was all unseen. Like a shepherd thou didst guide Israel thy flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.[1]

### 14. *For the Preservation of Israel, Jehovah's Vine* (80)

A prayer for Jehovah's saving presence (1-3)

Hearken, thou glorious[2] Shepherd-god : appear once more in thy glory and strength before Israel,[3] and unite her to us in Judah, and come and save us all.

O Jehovah of hosts, restore us and shine upon us
with thy gracious face, that so we may be saved.

The consternation of the people at Jehovah's delay (4-7)

O Jehovah of hosts, how long is thine anger to last with the prayers of thy people? Abundant tears are our meat and drink. Our enemies mock[4] and jeer at us; and it is all thy doing.

[1] If this is the real end, it is more than usually abrupt. We expect the appeal to continue : Why is it not so now? why is there no such revelation of thy power to-day as there was in the days of Moses?

[2] "Cherubim" (v. 1) is either an allusion to the thunder-cloud, on which Jehovah rides (18 : 10), or a reminiscence of the ark.

[3] Ephraim and Manasseh are taken to represent the northern kingdom, here regarded perhaps in an ideal aspect.

[4] "Thou makest them (scornfully) nod their head" (by emended text): or, with present text, "thou makest us a bone of contention," that is, they wrangle about us (v. 6).

O Jehovah of hosts, restore us and shine upon us with thy gracious face, that so we may be saved.

Israel, his vine, has been laid waste (8-13)

Israel, thy vine, thou didst bring out of Egypt, and plant in the land of Canaan, clearing the ground for her by driving away the native peoples. She struck her roots deep and overspread the land, covering the mountains with her shade, and with her giant branches,[1] and shooting her boughs as far as the sea and the distant Euphrates.[2] O why then hast thou torn down her fence,[3] and left her for every traveller to pluck? Even the wild boar tramples her, and the beasts eat her up.

A prayer for the protection of the vine (14-17)

O Jehovah of hosts, turn again, we pray, look down from heaven upon this vine; if our plaint be not enough, look with thine own eyes upon its devastation, and take it into thy gracious keeping. Plant again the vine thou didst plant of yore[4]—the vine which is now burnt and hewn down—and restore the people who are perishing before thine angry face. Let thy protecting hand be over the men whom thou hast reared to manhood's strength.[5]

[1] This is the general meaning of v. 10, but the detail is not so clear; either (i) covering the cedars of God (*i.e.*, the giant cedars) with her branches, or (ii) her branches were cedars of God, that is, gigantic. In the former case, the cedars (of Lebanon) will represent the north, as the mountains do the south.

[2] The ideal limits of the empire; the sea is the Mediterranean.

[3] That is, destroyed the kingdom of Judah.

[4] 15b appears to be inadvertently copied from 17b.

[5] That is, Israel (cf. v. 15).

O grant our request and we will not depart from thee. Preserve us in life, and we will honor thee in worship. A vow of gratitude (18, 19)

O Jehovah of hosts, restore us and shine upon us with thy gracious face, that so we may be saved.

## 15. *For Restoration and Forgiveness* (85)

Once, O our God, thou didst show[1] favor to our land, by stilling thine anger against us, graciously forgiving our sins, and bringing thy people back from exile. Jehovah's former forgiveness and favor (1-3)

Once again give over thine anger, and restore us; or wilt thou cherish thy wrath against us forever? O wilt thou not bring thy people back again from the gates of death, and make them glad in thee? Show us thy mercy, O our God, and save us. A prayer for present restoration (4-7)

I tremble with expectancy to hear what answer the mighty Jehovah will make to my prayer.[2] (Pause.)[3] Now I know that it will be an answer of peace—peace to his loyal people that turn their hearts to him.[4] Yes, assuredly, he will soon save those who fear him, and honor the land Vision of the Messianic days (8-13)

[1] It is also possible to interpret vv. 1-3 of the existing situation ("thou hast shown," etc.) and to take 4-7 as the prayer offered by Israel in the past. The difference in mood between the two paragraphs is undeniable.

[2] For a very similar passage, cf. Hab. 2 : 1 ff.

[3] He waits and listens.

[4] The Hebrew text of v. 8, which in clause c is rather unsatisfactory, can be easily emended on the basis of the Septuagint, which reads: He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints, and to those that turn their hearts to him.

by his glorious presence.[1] In the golden days so soon to dawn, men will be kind and loyal to each other, while from heaven salvation and her sister peace will shower their blessings down upon them. Yes, faithfulness will spring up among men like a golden harvest, and salvation will look down upon the happy earth from the windows of heaven. Jehovah will send his blessing, and his land will yield her harvest. He will pass through the land, attended by peace and salvation—salvation going as herald before him, and peace [2] following in the track of his steps.

### 16. *For Guidance and Favor* (86)[3]

Prayer to the God of pity (1-7)

Hear me, O my God, for I am poor and needy. Preserve thy servant who loves thee and trusts in thee. Thou art my God, be gracious to me, for I cry to thee continually. Make glad thy servant who longs for thee ; for thou art good and forgiving and rich in mercy to all that call upon thee. Give earnest heed, O my God, to my loud supplication. In time of distress I call upon thee, for thou dost answer me.

Jehovah is the only God (8-10)

There is no God like thee, and no works like thine. Thou art the creator of all nations ; they shall come before

[1] It is not quite certain whether, in v. 9, the glory that is to dwell in the land, is implicitly contrasted with the existing shame—glory in a general sense—or whether it refers to Jehovah's own glory, that is, his presence.

[2] So by a simple, but very probable emendation.

[3] This psalm is composed, almost exclusively, of citations from the Psalter.

thy presence, and do humble homage to thy name. For thou art great and a worker of wonders. Thou art God alone.

Prayer for guidance and favor (11-17)

Teach me, then, thy way, that I may walk therein, and heartily unite with those who fear thy name.[1] I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and honor thy name forever; for in thy great love thou hast saved me from the depths of the underworld. O my God, bands of haughty and violent and unscrupulous men have risen up against me to take my life; but thou, O Lord, art a God of pity and grace, a God of abounding patience and love and faithfulness. O turn to me, thy servant, in mercy, and endue me with thy strength and help, and grant me a sign that the issue will be good, and let mine enemies be put to shame, when they see how thou, O my God, hast helped and comforted me.

## 17. *The Prayer of Despair* (88)

The singer's utter misery (1-9)

O Jehovah, my God, I cry to thee by day and night for help. O grant that my prayer may reach thine ears; for my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. I am as a man without strength—counted as good as dead. Yea,

[1] V. 11. "Unite my heart." This is supposed to mean, "concentrate my heart upon thy service," or, as the psalm is almost certainly a collective psalm, "make us resolve, with one mind, to fear thee." But the phrase is somewhat strange, and some probability attaches to Duhm's simple emendation, "My heart shall join those who fear thy name."

my home is already among the dead,[1] like the slain in their graves whom thou hast forgotten—cut off from thy protecting hand. Thou hast set me at the bottom of the underworld, among the shadows deep and dark. Thou hast suffered the billows of thine anger to reach me ; thou hast made me an abomination to my friends, so that they will not come near me,[2] and I am as a prisoner, unable to go out. Mine eyes are wasted with sorrow, as I call on thee with outstretched hands continually.

His appeal to Jehovah to save him from death (10-13)

O help me, ere I perish ; for thou canst work no wonder for the dead, nor can the shades arise and praise thee. No story of thy love and faithfulness can be told in the cruel grave. In the dark land of forgetfulness there can be no revelation of thy wondrous power to save. Therefore, while I am yet alive, I cry in the morning to thee for help.

The singer's sorrows and desolation (14-18)

O why dost thou forsake me and hide thy face from me? For from my youth I have been wretched and at the point of death.[3] Thy terrors are upon me, they have robbed me of my senses. Thy fierce and awful anger, like a surging flood continually round about me, has swept me into destruction. Those who love me thou

[1] Instead of "free" (A. V.) or "cast off" (R. V.) among the dead, we should probably emend to "I am reckoned," or "have been made to dwell with, the dead."

[2] As if he were a leper.

[3] See note on 71 : 18 (p. 227).

hast put far away from me, and darkness is my only friend.[1]

### 18. *For Deliverance from Slander* (120)

When I cried to Jehovah in my distress, he answered me. O hear me again, my God, and deliver me from the tongue of calumny and falsehood. Israel's prayer for deliverance (1, 2)

Thou hast solemnly sworn[2] to punish the slanderer, and this shall be the manner of his punishment: thou wilt give him over to the sharp arrows of his warrior foe, and his house thou wilt give to the flames. The divine penalty upon lying and treachery (3, 4)

Alas! that my pilgrimage is spent among barbarous and heathen men.[3] I have dwelt long enough among the enemies of peace. I am for peace; but, the moment I speak of it, they are for war. The sadness of the life of the pious (5-7)

### 19. *For Divine Pity* (123)

To whom can we look but to thee? Unto thee, then, do we lift up our eyes, O thou whose home is in heaven. Israel longingly prays for the divine pity (1-4)

[1] So Duhm. If this be too modern, possibly a better parallelism would be secured by a single change in the division of the letters of the last two words: "Acquaintances he has removed" (*i.e.*, thou hast removed).

[2] These two verses are very obscure, and the precise meaning is quite uncertain. But "what shall he give thee and what shall he add to thee?" seems to be modelled on the formula for oaths, "Jehovah do so unto me and more also," etc.

[3] Meshech (Gen. 10 : 2), between the Black Sea and the Caspian. Kedar (Gen. 25 : 13), an Arabian tribe. These tribal names are perhaps meant to be symbolical; the peoples they represent are too far apart to be taken literally, unless the song was intended to be sung by the Dispersion.

As earnestly as a servant watches the hand of his master, or a maid the hand of her mistress, so earnestly do we watch for a sign from thee, our God, in the hope that thou wilt show us thy pity. O pity, pity us, our God; for we have tasted enough of the bitterness of scorn, enough of the contempt of the proud that are at ease.

### 20. *For Childlike Confidence in Jehovah* (131)

Confession of childlike humility (1, 2)

My heart is not haughty, O my God, nor do I wear a lofty look, nor deal with things too great and high for me. My soul was like a troubled sea; but now I have made it still and quiet, and it lies in a happy peace, like the weaned child that rests on his mother's bosom.

Confidence in God (3)

O Israel, hope in thy God, now and evermore.

### 21. *For Deliverance from Scorn and Persecution* (44)[1]

What Jehovah did for Israel in the early days (1-3)

From the days of the olden time, the story of all that thou didst, O God, in the days of our fathers, has been handed down to us—how by thy mighty hand thou didst tear up the peoples of Canaan by the roots and crush them, planting our fathers in their places and causing them to spread abroad. For surely it was not their own sword that won the land, nor their own arm the victory; but it

[1] Of the remaining psalms in this group (44, 74, 79, 54, 55, 60, 140, 141, 142), it is highly probable that the first three (47, 74, 79) are Maccabean and quite possible that the others are also, though certainty on such a point is, in the nature of the case, unattainable.

was thy mighty arm that conquered, and thy gracious face that smiled upon them in love.

It was thou, my king and my God, who didst ordain the victories of Israel. It is thou who dost strengthen us to thrust back our foes and stamp upon them ; for never do I trust in my bow or sword to give me the victory. Our victory comes from thee, as also the confusion of our foes; therefore we always boast in thee, and praise thy name continually.

Israel's unabated confidence in his power (4-8)

Yet, despite our praises of thee, and the work thou didst for our fathers, thou hast rejected us, their children, and disgraced us, by refusing to accompany our armies to battle. Thou hast put us to rout before the foe : they plunder us to their heart's content. Thou hast given us up like sheep to be butchered, and scattered us as slaves about the world. Thou hast sold thine own people for a paltry price, yea, for a mere song. Our neighbors mock and jeer at us ; we are a byword throughout the world. Everyone shakes his head scornfully at us, and it is all thy doing. I am continually overwhelmed with shame and confusion of face; for the scorner and the blasphemer assail me with their words, and the enemy glares at me with eyes that bode vengeance.

Israel's present sorrows and sufferings (9-16)

All this misery has come upon us, though we be innocent. We have not forgotten thee, or been false to the covenant. In thought and in deed we have loyally walked in thy ways, and yet thou hast thrust us into the deep

Israel faithful unto death (17-22)

darkness of the wilderness where the wild beasts are. If we had really forgotten thee, O our God, and stretched out our hands, in worship, to another, wouldest thou not have searched that out? for thou knowest the secrets of the heart. But thou knowest well, O God, that it is for our loyalty to thee that we are being slain continually and counted no better than sheep for the slaughter.

Passionate prayer for deliverance (23-26)

Thou art sleeping, Lord, awake, arise, reject us not forever. O why art thou turning thy back upon us? why art thou forgetting our oppression and misery? for—body and soul—we are humbled to the dust. O rise, help, and redeem us, for thy mercy's sake.

### 22. *For Deliverance from Plunder and Spoliation* (74)

Appeal to Jehovah to remember and help his people (1-3)

O our God, art thou not our Shepherd, and are we not the sheep of thy pasture? Why then is thine anger hot, and why hast thou cast us off so utterly? Remember thy congregation which, in the ancient days, thou didst redeem from the bondage of Egypt, to be thine own forever. Think of thine ancient home on Zion, now an utter desolation, and visit the ruins thereof. Everything in the temple has been dishonored by the enemy.

The heathen assaults upon the temple, people, and religion (4-9)

They roar like lions through the midst of it, they set up their ensigns upon it, fastening them with blows from their axes into the woodwork of the door.[1] The carv-

[1] So substantially Duhm. Others, "hewing the woodwork like a woodsman in a forest." The text is uncertain (v. 5).

ing they hack to pieces with axes and hatchets. They have profaned thy holy house [1] by setting it on fire. Their rooted purpose is to exterminate us altogether: they have burned every sanctuary in the land. The badges of our faith are no more to be seen. There is not a prophet left —not one who knows how long these horrors will last.

Appeal to Jehovah, who showed his might at the creation (10-17)

How long, O our God, is the enemy to scoff? is he to blaspheme thy name continually? Why wilt thou not put forth thy hand and strike? For thou art our king from the ancient days, evermore working deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth. In the battle with that great monster, the primeval deep, it was thou [2] that didst crush him by thy might, shivering in pieces the heads of the dragons who came to his aid, and also the many-headed leviathan, whose body thou didst give the beasts of the wilderness to devour. It was thou who, by a stroke, didst create the springs and the brooks, and dry up ever-flowing streams. Thine are the day and night, and it was thou that didst establish sun and star. It was thou that didst fix earth's boundaries: it was thou that didst create summer and winter.

Prayer for preservation from cruelty (18-23)

Yet, despite this mighty power of thine, the reckless enemy have blasphemed thy name. O give not thy dear ones over to the beasts: forget not thy poor servants for-

[1] In 1 Macc. 4 : 38, only the gates are burned.

[2] In vv. 13-17, "thou" occupies a prominent position, and is very emphatic.

ever. Think of thy covenant with them and pity them; for cruelty follows them into the dark places where they take refuge. O save from shame thy people who are crushed, and turn their sorrow into praise. Arise, O my God, defend thy cause. Bethink thee how continually thou art insulted by reprobates, and forget not the tumultuous clamor that ceaselessly rises from their rebel lips.

### 23. *For Help in Bitter Need* (79)

The cruelty of the heathen (1-4)

Heathen have entered thy land, O our God, desecrated thy holy temple, and laid Jerusalem in ruins. They have thrown out the dead bodies of thy faithful servants for birds and beasts to feed on. Unburied lie the corpses round about Jerusalem of those whose blood they poured out like water.[1] On every side our neighbors revile and mock and jeer.

Prayer for speedy help (5-12)

O our God, when will thine anger be past? Will thy flaming indignation against us never cease? The heathen nations that do not worship thee have devoured and desolated thy people. O pour out thy wrath upon them; but meet us soon with thy pity, and remember not against us the sins of our forefathers,[2] for we are utterly crushed. If not for our sakes, then for thine own, come to our help, O God of our salvation. Come to the defence of thine

[1] Vv. 2, 3 are quoted in 1 Macc. 7 : 17, and referred to the massacre of the Hasidæans by Alcimus (162 B. C.).

[2] Or possibly, "former sins," cf. v. 9.

honor. Forgive and save us for thine own name's sake, and stop the mouths of the heathen, who impudently deny thy power. Before our very eyes, avenge upon the heathen the slaughter of thy servants. Listen to the prisoners' moan, and free by thy majestic arm those that are doomed to death; and punish our neighbors richly for their blasphemy of thee.

Then we who are thy flock[1] will thank our good Shepherd forever, and declare thy praise for all time to come. Vow of gratitude (13)

### 24. *For Deliverance from Oppressors* (54)

O God! manifest thy power and save me and make my cause triumphant. Hear, O hear my prayer, O God. For strangers have risen up against me and violently sought my life, forgetting that there is a God who can save me and take vengeance upon them. Prayer for deliverance from oppressors (1-3)

For see! the Lord is helping and sustaining me; yes, and he shall avenge me of mine enemies. Cut them off, O God, in thy faithfulness, and I will offer free-will offerings to thee, and praise thy gracious name, for thou hast brought me safely out of all my trouble, and feasted my eyes on my foes. Assurance of answer (4-7)

### 25. *For Help against a Traitorous Friend* (55)

Give earnest heed, O God, to my prayer, and hide not thyself, but answer the loud and bitter lament which I Passionate prayer in a desperate situation (1-11)

[1] Cf. 80 : 1; 23 : 1.

raise, because of the clamor[1] of my godless foes, as they plunge me into trouble in the fury of their hatred. Oh I am utterly confounded. My heart is throbbing fast in deadly terror. I am trembling with fear, yea, overwhelmed with horror. I long in my heart for the wings of a dove, that I might fly away, far away, into the wilderness, and rest there in peace, escaping with all speed from the raging tempest within the city; for, night and day, wrong and strife keep watch like sentinels upon her walls. Within the city itself is evil, sorrow, ruin; while oppression and fraud haunt the market-place continually. O Lord, confuse, confound them.

Vengeance upon the traitor (12-15)

The taunts of an enemy I could have borne, the arrogance of one who hated me I could have shunned; but thou! my comrade, my own familiar friend, with whom I had intercourse so pleasant, and who had gone by my side in the throng to the temple. May a swift and sudden doom, like the doom that overtook Korah, plunge them in their infamy down alive into the pit.[2]

Assurance of answer (16-19)

As for me, I cry to God; and he will surely hear me, when three times a day I lift my plaint to him, and he will bring me safely out of the sore battle where many are against me. Yes, in answer to my prayer, he who sits

[1] Emended text: better than the doubtful "oppression" of the text (v. 3).

[2] The last clause of v. 15 is difficult, but must, one would think, have had a stronger meaning in such a context, than that given in A. V. or R. V.

upon his everlasting throne will humble those lawless men [1] who do not fear him.

He sullied the covenant of friendship by laying cruel hands upon his own friends. Smooth-tongued as he was and fair-spoken, his words were sharp as swords, and war was in his heart. The traitor (20, 21)

I will commit [2] my cause to my God, for he loves me, [3] and will sustain me: he never suffers the righteous to totter. But I know, O God, that thou wilt hurl my adversaries speedily into the grave; for blood-thirsty and treacherous men are cut off in their prime. But, as for me, I trust in thee. Destiny of the faithful and the traitor (22, 23)

## 26. *For Jehovah's Help in Battle* (60)

O our God, thou hast rejected us. Thou hast broken our ranks and routed us in thine anger. O restore us to The prayer of the defeated (1-5)

[1] "Changes" in verse 19 is unsatisfactory and improbable, but no very probable emendation has been suggested.

[2] As the verb is in the imperative, the speaker must be addressing himself. Duhm, however, thinks that the verse is interpolated, partly because of the abrupt change in the personal pronouns; the *he* in "he shall sustain thee" does not agree well with the emphatic *thou* at the beginning of the next verse.

[3] Unfortunately much uncertainty attaches to the word rendered "thy burden" in the English version (v. 22). It is not even certain whether it is a noun (= burden, care, desire, etc.) or a verb. The above rendering is at least a possible translation, and in any case represents—perhaps not too strongly—the general sense.

victory again.[1] The whole land trembles with the horror of our defeat : thou hast shaken and riven it as with an earthquake, and it is swaying to and fro. O heal this torn land of ours again. Thou hast beset us with hardship. Thou hast given us the intoxicating cup of thine anger to drink, so that we can no more keep our feet. Thou hast given thy worshippers a banner, to which they may flee from the enemies' arrows.[2] O hear our prayer, and come to the fray ; smite with thy victorious arm, and deliver thy beloved.[3]

Ancient oracle promising victory (6-8)

Fulfil now the ancient oracle, which promised victory to the king, and the conquest of all the northern land on both sides of the Jordan—promised, too, the possession of Ephraim the warlike, and Judah the leader, the humiliation of Moab and Edom,[4] and the triumphant conquest of Philistia.

Prayer for fulfilment of the oracle (9-12)

O that this promise might now be fulfilled! O that someone would lead me to Edom's strong city![5] But

[1] Either, thou hast turned us back ; or, turn us back, restore us, cf. 2b.

[2] V. 4 is exceedingly difficult. If the above paraphrase be correct, it will be uttered in bitter irony. This banner is not, as it should be, the rallying point for a fresh fight. Or the meaning may be: to rise up (that is, against heathen nations) in defence of the truth. There are difficulties in both translations.

[3] Vv. 5-12 = 108 : 6-13.

[4] To wash (miry) feet in, and cast (soiled) shoes over, are expressions of contempt. It is said that the throwing of the shoe indicated claim to possession.

[5] Possibly Petra (the Sela of the Old Testament)—almost inaccessible.

thou, O our God, who alone canst help us, hast rejected us and dost not accompany our armies to battle. O help us thyself against the foe, for vain is the help of man. By the help of God we shall yet do bravely, and he will trample on our foes.

### 27. *For Preservation in Extreme Danger* (140)

Danger from the treachery and violence of enemies (1-5)

Deliver me, O my God, from the violent men, who are continually scheming and stirring up strife with their sharp and poisonous tongues. Preserve me from the arrogant violence of the ungodly, who scheme to trip me up with the snares which they secretly lay in my path.

Prayer for the defeat of the enemies' plans (6-8)

O Jehovah, thou art my God, listen to my earnest prayer. O Jehovah, my Lord, my mighty Saviour, thou dost shield my head in the day of battle. O fulfil not then the desires of the godless, crown not their wicked purposes with success.

Prayer for Nemesis upon the wicked (9-11)

Let them not lift up their heads against me; but let their slanders bring them to ruin. Rain down burning coals upon them;[1] smite them down with thy fire, so that they shall never rise again. May there be no place for the slanderer in the land, and may the man of violence be hunted from misfortune to misfortune.

Confidence in the triumph of the upright (12, 13)

Well do I know that Jehovah champions the cause of the godly who are crushed. They shall live to praise thy name and dwell in the light of thy gracious countenance.

[1] Cf. 11 : 6.

## 28. *For Deliverance from the Ways of the Wicked* (141)

Appeal to Jehovah (1, 2)

O my God, hasten to my help, and hearken to the voice of my cry. May my hands uplifted in prayer be as acceptable to thee as the incense of evening sacrifice.

Prayer to be kept from impatience and participation in sin (3, 4)

Forbid, O my God, that the sight of the wicked should lead me to be guilty of impatient speech, or to associate with them in their godlessness. Never be it mine to share their sinful pleasures.

Welcome is reproof from a friend (5)

A wound from a good man I will take as a kindness : [1] a reproof from him is as welcome as oil to the head of a guest.[2] I will pray for him in his calamity.[3]

Prayer for deliverance (7-10)

Like the clods turned over by the plough, our bones are scattered on the ground, ready to be devoured by the greedy jaws of the under-world. Our eyes are toward thee, in whom we trust. Pour not out our life like water upon the ground. O preserve us from the snares which the wicked have laid for us ; and grant that they may fall therein themselves while we pass by unharmed.

## 29. *For Deliverance from Determined Persecutors* (142)

The plaint (1-4)

Earnestly do I make my supplication to thee, O my God, pouring out my complaint and telling my sorrow be-

[1] Cf. Prov. 27 : 6. [2] Cf. Luke 7 : 37, 46.

[3] The precise meaning of 4d is very obscure, while the meaning and connection of v. 6 are hopelessly difficult. It is hardly worth while to enumerate the desperate attempts to make sense of this verse.

fore thee—thou knowest it well—when my spirit faints. Secret snares are laid in my path, and, wherever I look—to the right or the left—there is no escape, and there is none to care for me.

To whom can I cry but to thee? Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Listen to my cry, for I am very weak. Save me from my persecutors who are too strong for me. Bring me out of prison, that so I may give thee thanks; for the righteous are awaiting a proof of thy favor to me.

The prayer (5-7)

## III

### ANSWERED PRAYERS

#### 1. *The Triumph of the Sufferer* (22)

My God, my God, why hast thou left me? why hast thou gone so far away, neither helping nor hearing me, despite the loud cries that all the day and night I ceaselessly send up to thee? Yet it cannot be that thou hast forgotten; for thou art the Holy One who art throned upon the praises of thy grateful people, and never in the days gone by did our fathers trust thee in vain. Never didst thou put their faith to shame; thou didst save them when they cried to thee. But it is not so with me. Like a worm I am trodden under foot, reproached and despised by one and all. All who see me mock me with their gaping

Forsaken by God and despised by man (1-8)

mouths and wagging heads. They taunt me for my confidence in thee. "Let him roll his care upon Jehovah," they say, "let him deliver him, since he is pleased with him."

Passionate appeal to the God of his infancy (9-11)

O my God, hast thou not been the providence of all my life? It was thou that didst bring me out of the womb, and assure me of life on the bosom of my mother. On thy care I was cast, as soon as I was born,[1] and from that day to this, thou hast been my God. Be not far from me, for trouble is nigh, and there is no one to help me.

Malicious cruelty of the enemy (12-18)

Mine enemies have surrounded me like mighty bulls of Bashan. They come at me with their gaping jaws like ravening, roaring lions; the caitiffs gather about me like wild and hungry dogs. By reason of their clamor and cruelty, my body is utterly wasted away. The strength and sap of my life are gone, my throat is dried up, my tongue cleaves to my palate, they [2] are bringing me down to the grave. My hands and feet they have pierced,[3] I can count all my bones; while, as for mine enemies, they feast their cruel eyes upon me. Like robbers, they strip me bare and divide my garments among them, casting lots for that which they cannot divide.

Final appeal to God to save (19-21)

But, O my God, I entreat thee to be near to me. O my

[1] An allusion to the custom in virtue of which the father formally acknowledged the new-born child.

[2] By an easy change, for "thou."

[3] Or possibly "disfigured." At any rate, the versions leave little doubt that instead of the phrase "like a lion" (in v. 16) we ought to read a verb.

strength, hasten to my help, and save me from the power of these dogs. Save me from the mouth of the lions, save me [1] from the horns of the unicorns.

Public thanksgiving for answered prayer (22-26)

Thou hast heard my prayer, and I will gratefully declare thy name among my brethren assembled for worship. All ye that worship Jehovah, ye children of Israel, praise him with me and glorify and fear him. For he did not turn away in contempt from my misery, but he heard and answered my cry for help. It is the victory wrought by him that inspires my song of praise in the great assembly, and I shall pay my vows in the presence of all who worship him. The downtrodden shall be blessed with abundance. As they love Jehovah, so shall they have reason to praise him, and to lift up their hearts in everlasting joy.

The heathen are to be converted through this ever-memorable deliverance (27-31)

The very heathen, one and all, even to the ends of the earth, will be moved by Jehovah's marvellous grace to Israel to remember him and turn to him and bow in homage before him; for he is their rightful Lord. To him alone shall every knee be bowed—all the poor of the earth, and all who are ready to die, and all who are of a

[1] The text reads, "thou hast answered me;" and the word, which is the last in the Hebrew verse, is regarded (*e.g.*, by Cheyne) as the transition to the glad mood of the second part of the psalm. The explanation is ingenious and suggestive, but perhaps a little artificial. Wellhausen emends and translates: "save my wretched life"—which is rather improbable. Duhm suggests "help me," though the word he proposes is not very like the word in the text.

despondent spirit.[1] All Israel shall serve him, and the story of the Lord's great victory shall be told to the coming generation, and to generations yet unborn.

### 2. *Help against the Wicked* (28)[2]

Prayer for preservation of Israel, and punishment of the wicked (1-5)

To thee I cry, thou mighty God, my defence. O hearken and answer, or thy silence will bring me down to the grave. O hear my loud entreaty, when I cry with hands outstretched toward the place where thou art throned.[3] Forbid that I should share the fate of those wicked, godless ones, who hide their cruel purposes beneath fair words. Give them what they deserve : do to them as they have done to others. They think they can go on with impunity, for they have no insight into the ways of Jehovah's working, nor do they reflect that, instead of building them up, he will tear them down.

Thanksgiving for answered prayer (6, 7)

My prayer has been heard. Blessed be Jehovah, my mighty defender. In him I trusted, and he sent me the

[1] V. 29 fairly bristles with textual difficulties. Whether the " fat ones of the earth " mean the powerful heathen, or, in consideration of the context, should be emended to " the poor," is an open question. The meaning of clause c is exceedingly doubtful. The one practically certain thing in the verse is that the four Hebrew consonants rendered by " shall eat " should be divided into two words of two consonants each, and be translated " to him alone."

[2] A collective psalm ; cf. vv. 8, 9.

[3] The innermost room of the temple ; equivalent to the holy of holies—here used probably for the temple itself.

help that has rejoiced my heart and touched my lips to song.[1]

Jehovah is the strength of his people,[2] the omnipotent Saviour of his anointed.[3] Save then thy people, and bless thine inheritance. Feed thy lambs, O Shepherd of Israel, and bear them on thine arms forever. Prayer for the people (8, 9)

### 3. *Confidence in Divine Favor* (56)

Be gracious to me,[4] O my God, for thou art mighty to save me from mine enemies—are they not but mortal men? —who are snatching at me all the time, and wearing me out with their everlasting warfare; for those who bitterly[5] contend with me, are many. Prayer for the divine favor (1, 2)

But in my terror, I trust in thee; and I shall yet have cause to praise my God for fulfilling his promise; for trusting in him, I fear not what flesh can do to me.[6] The psalmist's confidence in God (3, 4)

[1] The Greek version, which appears to have transposed two of the words, runs thus: My flesh revived, and I will praise him with my heart.

[2] In 8, the Hebrew reads: Jehovah is a strength *to them*. The principle versions read *to his people*, which is probably correct. It differs from the present Hebrew text only by a single letter.

[3] Different opinions prevail as to who is meant by the anointed—whether a king (such as Hezekiah or Josiah), or the high-priest, or perhaps even the people. The parallelism suggests, but cannot be said to compel the last interpretation. Cf. Hab. 3 : 13, where the same difficulty occurs.

[4] Collective: note the reference to the "peoples" in v. 7 (R. V.).

[5] The word in v. 2 rendered "proudly" in R. V. and "O thou most High" in A. V. should probably be divided into two words, of which the first means "bitterly," and the second goes with the next verse.

[6] Note refrain in v. 11.

Prayer for the punishment of his enemies (5-7)

They hurt my cause continually, and plan to injure me, gathering in groups, and skulking about, and keeping an eye on my steps, as though they hoped to take my life. O my God, pay them out for their sin.[1] Hurl down in thine anger the peoples who vex me.

The divine pity (8, 9)

Thou hast counted my sighs,[2] and remembered my sorrow.[3] As soon as I call, mine enemies shall be turned back, and thus shall I know that God is for me.

The psalmist's confidence (10, 11)

My God shall yet give me cause to praise his word—good cause to praise his word. Thus trusting in him, I fear not what man can do to me.

His gratitude (12, 13)

Thou hast heard my prayer; and I will render thee, O God, a thank-offering, in discharge of the vows which are upon me. For thou hast saved me from death, and kept my feet from falling, and enabled me to walk before thee[4] in the light of life.

[1] By emended text (v. 7). Others suppose that the word for "no" has accidentally fallen out after the word for "sin"—the two words being much alike in the Hebrew—and translate, "There shall be no escape for them on account of their sin."

[2] In 8a, a word is wanted indicated something that can be counted. The Hebrew—misery or wandering (?)—is not very good. Duhm reads "sleepless hours" (cf. Job 7 : 4).

[3] "Are they not in thy book?" is probably an addition, intended to explain the use of the word "bottle."

[4] This contains the double thought of a good life under the divine protection.

### 4. *Protection against Adversaries* (57)

Be gracious, O be gracious to me, my God; for, as thou hast been my refuge in days gone by, so would I now seek shelter with thee, till the dread storm of persecution be past. I cry to God most high—to the God who, in his omnipotent love, will establish my cause; for he will send to my succor his angels, Mercy and Faithfulness, and save me from the taunts of my tormentors. I am in a den of ravening lions — cruel enemies, whose tongues are sharp as swords, and who are ready to devour me with deadly weapons of war. O come in judgment upon them; and let earth and heaven confess thy transcendent glory. Confident prayer for protection (1-5)

They [1] have sought to entangle my feet and lay me low; but they have been caught in their own trap, and they have been themselves laid low. Of their ruin and mine own triumph I am now assured: so my heart is steadfast,[2] O my God, yes, firm and steadfast. I will sing and play. I will say, O slumbering soul of mine, awake. O silent instruments of song, awake. O dawn, awake,[3] I will sing Assurance and gratitude (6-11)

[1] Vv. 6-11 possibly constitute a separate poem. The feeling is certainly very different from that of vv. 1-5; but perhaps the change is no more abrupt than in other psalms (cf. vv. 12, 13 of the preceding psalm), and there is a refrain common to both (vv. 5, 11).

[2] Vv. 7-11 = 108 : 1-5.

[3] I will awake the dawn : the dawn personified as in 139 : 9.

thy praises, O Lord, the wide world over. I will sing of thy mercy, which is high as heaven, and thy faithfulness, which stretcheth to the clouds. Let earth and heavens confess thy transcendent glory.

# THE ROYAL PSALMS

# THE ROYAL PSALMS

## I

### INTRODUCTION

The idea of the king and the kingdom exercised a very powerful influence over the imagination of Israel. When the king was good or victorious in war, the people rejoiced in him; when he was bad, they believed that a better would one day come: and when the kingdom had irretrievably fallen, though some acquiesced in the fall, the general heart yearned and prayed for its restoration.

The ultimate reference and precise interpretation of the royal, or kingly psalms, is one of the most complicated problems of the Psalter. There are those who maintain that all the psalms which mention the king come from the days of the kingdom, refer to one of the historical kings, and are therefore pre-exilic; others believe that the king of the Psalter is always an ideal figure—the Messianic king of the latter days. There is, perhaps, a measure of truth in both these views. While the language of some of the psalms in question is tolerably vague, and offers few points of contact with the known history, the lan-

guage of other psalms is quite definite. It is most natural, for example, to interpret Psalm 20 as a prayer for some king about to start on a military expedition, whether, as has been suggested, the reference be to Josiah before the battle of Megiddo or not (608 B. C.). On the whole, it seems most probable that even the psalms of the largest outlook and the most prophetic spirit, start from some definite historical situation, and do not merely issue from the sanguine imagination of the poet (cf. 72, 110).

But, even if this be so, the larger reference would naturally suggest itself to minds which had been taught by four centuries of history, and above all by the oracle in Second Samuel 7,[1] to cherish an invincible belief in the permanence of the Davidic dynasty. It is further important to remember that these psalms were sung by the post-exilic church, which, in the absence of any king upon the throne, or of any reasonable probability of ever seeing one there in the ordinary course of historical development, must have given these psalms "touching the king" a Messianic interpretation. The tendency which existed from the beginning to read a larger than their original meaning into them would be enormously confirmed by the course of post-exilic history. But the references to the king's descendants (*e.g.*, 45 : 16) show that these psalms did not originally contemplate the Messiah, as we use that word to-day.

[1] Cf. Pss. 89 : 19-37; 132 : 11, 12.

When we look at these psalms more closely, we find that they are full of attractive elements. True, sometimes they breathe a martial spirit, which shows how far they are from being fitting anticipations of the Prince of Peace. We do not, for example, think of Christ as dashing his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel (2 : 9). But the warrior spirit of Psalm 2 [1] is matched by the peace of Psalm 72, in celebration of the king whose reign is to be gentle and refreshing as the showers that water the earth. It is characteristic of both psalms that whether by methods of peace or war, they claim the whole earth for Israel's king. In Psalm 72, the king is an exceedingly attractive figure, who loves justice, defends the right, pities and protects the poor. These traits of courage and justice are strikingly combined in the chivalrous figure of Psalm 45, who rides forth in his armor to the defence of truth and right. In a line full of ethical insight, his throne is declared to be eternal, because it is founded on righteousness (45 : 6; cf. 19 : 9a). Few kingly programmes could be more attractive than the royal manifesto contained in Psalm 101, indicative of an ambition to cherish a good conscience, to preserve a pure court, to favor the good and give short shrift to liars and deceivers. When the dynasty had fallen, never to rise again, crushing in its fall the brilliant hopes which it had evoked and, for long, sustained, it is not to be wondered at that a people, smart-

[1] Cf. 18 : 42; 110 : 5, 6.

ing under the recent sting of disappointment, if not despair, should have spoken hot words to God, and challenged him with breaking the covenant (89 : 38 ff.).

## II

### THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING (45)

The delightful theme (1)

To the depths of my heart I am stirred with my goodly theme; for it is a song in honor of the king that I sing, and my tongue moves swiftly as the pen of a skilful scribe.

Address to the king: his beauty, prowess, and justice (2-7)

There is none, O king, so fair as thou, and the grace that plays about thy lips can be none other than divine. And thou art as just as thou art fair. So gird on thy sword, thou mighty one, and in thy glorious splendor mount thy war-chariot, and ride forth to victory in the cause of truth and justice.[1] For terrible is thy right hand, and sharp are thine arrows; nations fall, and thine enemies perish beneath thee.[2] Thy throne shall stand [3] forever, because it is founded on justice; and it is because thou lovest justice and hatest wrong that Jehovah thy God has made

[1] V. 4, "meekness" is hardly in place here: there are also grammatical objections to it.

[2] The text in vv. 4, 5 is difficult, and probably has to be emended. The above paraphrase represents the general sense.

[3] In v. 6, for "O God," probably the original was simply "will be."

thee more glad than all thy companions on this thy bridal day.

The welcome (8, 9)

Thy garments are fragrant with sweet-smelling odors, and, floating through the open gates of the ivory palace, as the procession draws nigh, are wafted strains of exquisite music. Royal ladies approach in their jewels, and the queen herself in gold of Ophir.

Counsel to the queen; her honors (10-12)

O listen, my daughter, look and lend thine ear to me; forget thy kindred and thy father's house, and yield to the king when he desires thy beauty—for he is thy lord. And thou shalt have costly presents from Tyre,[1] and flattering gifts from the rich among the people—yea, treasures of all kinds.

Description of the queen and her attendants (13-15)

As for the queen, her dress is of pearl,[2] inwoven with threads of gold; and she is led to the king with her maidens in her train, and her comrades whom she brought with her are led amid joy and gladness into the palace of the king.

Prayer for the queen's posterity and fame (16, 17)

May the children to be born to you, take the places of the fathers, and be princes in all the land![3]

This song of mine shall perpetuate thy name and praise throughout the world forever.

[1] V. 12, "The daughter of Tyre" is probably equal to "the people of Tyre" (cf. daughter of Zion); but some suppose that this is an address to the Prince's wife, who, on this view, is a Tyrian (and thou, O daughter of Tyre).

[2] By an easy, and very probable change of text.

[3] Or earth.

## III

### *The Coronation Anniversary of the King* [1] (21)

God's past goodness to the king (1-7)

The king is exceeding glad, O Jehovah, because thou dost mightily help him. His heart's desire thou hast granted, nor hast thou withheld the thing he asked for. Thou goest forth to meet him with prosperity and blessing; thou settest on his head a crown of pure gold. He prayed for life, and thou didst hear his prayer, and grant him years exceeding many.[2] Through thy help his glory is great: dignity and majesty thou hast conferred upon him. Thou makest him for all time to come the king of peerless blessedness. With the light of thy countenance thou dost make him exceeding glad. Yea, the king trusts in Jehovah, and the mercy of the Most High will preserve his throne from tottering.

Prayer for his continued prosperity (8-12)

Thou[3] shalt search out with avenging hand all them that hate thee, and in thine anger cast them into the furnace of fire, and destroy their children from the face of the earth. When they cunningly plan thy destruction, they shall fail; for thou wilt force them to flee, aiming at their faces with thine arrows.

[1] This explanation of the purpose of the psalm is, of course, only conjectural, but probable.

[2] "For ever and ever" is a hyperbole. Cf. Ps. 61 : 6, 7; 1 Kings 1 : 31.

[3] Apparently Jehovah.

Lift thyself up, O our God, in thy strength : so shall we celebrate thy mighty power. Grateful acknowledgment to God (13)

## IV

### PRAYERS FOR THE KING'S WELFARE AND SUCCESS

### 1. *On the Eve of Battle* (20)

Our prayer for thee, O king, is that the ever-watchful God of Israel may answer thee in the time of distress, setting thee where thou art safe from the foe, and sending thee from the temple-hill the help and support that thou needest. All thine offerings and sacrifices may he favorably remember, and grant thee all thy heart's desire, and bring thy designs to fruition! Then will we exult in thy victory and magnify [1] the name of our God. [2] An appeal for Jehovah's help (1-5)

Now I am sure that Jehovah will give the victory to his anointed king, and answer from his holy heaven with his mighty and victorious hand. In horses and chariots the foe are strong; but, as for us, our strength [3] is in the name of Jehovah our God. The foe shall assuredly fall prostrate; but, as for us, we will rise and stand upright. O Jehovah, save the king, and answer when we call. Prayer answered; Israel's victory sure (6-9)

[1] Instead of "set up our banner," by a probable transposition of the consonants, supported by the Greek version.

[2] Probably at this point sacrifice is offered and the omens prove favorable.

[3] For "we will make mention," read "we will be strong" (v. 7).

### 2. *For the Preservation of the King's Life* (61)

Prayer for protection (1-4)

Give earnest heed to my prayer, when my spirit is low and I cry to thee from the distant land. Help me to climb the rock which is too high for me.[1] For thou art my refuge, my strong tower of defence against the foe. O that I might abide forever as guest in thy tent,[2] and hide me beneath thy sheltering wings.

Assurance of answer (5)

For I know, O God, that thou hearest my prayers, and wilt grant once more possession of the land to those who loyally worship thee.

Prayer for the king (6-8)

We would also remember the king. O long may his life be spared, and may his years be very many. May he ever live in the light of thy gracious presence. Command thine angels, Mercy and Faithfulness, to watch over him. Hear this my prayer, and then I will praise thy name forever, paying my vows each day.

### 3. *For the Overthrow of His Enemies* (63)

The vision of God in public worship (1-5)

O Jehovah, thou art my God; body and soul I thirst for thee, as the parched land for the rain. As once in the worship of the temple, I beheld thy power and thy glory,[3] so in this spirit of glad awe would I continue to praise

[1] Duhm translates, "Guide me in the distress which is too sore for me."

[2] Probably refers to the temple, or at least to the city of Jerusalem; the speaker is in exile (v. 2).

[3] Cf. Isaiah 6.

and bless thee with uplifted hands as long as I live; for thy love is better than life.[1] My soul has feasted royally, and I shall praise thee in glad songs.

The vision of God in life (6-8)

Yea,[2] on my bed I think of thee and meditate of thee in the watches of the night. For thou hast been my help and beneath thy sheltering wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to thee, and thou holdest me up.

The destiny of the faithful and the unfaithful (9-11)

But as for those who seek to take my life, down they will go to the lowest depths, perishing by the sword and left unburied on the battle-field for jackals to devour. Such is the fate of the king's enemies; but the king himself shall rejoice in his God, and all who loyally serve the cause of Jehovah shall have reason to glory, while the liars who oppose them will be struck dumb.

## V

### THE CHARACTER OF THE KING

### 1. *His Desire to Rule Righteously* (101)

Vows of personal purity (1-4)

I would celebrate before thee, O my God, in music and song,[3] the love and justice that ought to mark the king.

[1] His love or mercy was his real glory. This is the revelation to Moses (Exod. 34 : 6) which is so often alluded to in the Psalter: cf. 86 : 15 ; 103 : 7.

[2] Or perhaps, though less probably, "when," connected immediately with the preceding verse.

[3] Possibly Duhm is right in reading, "I would *keep* love and justice." "Keep" and "sing" are somewhat alike in Hebrew.

I will see that my walk is blameless,[1] and within my own home I would fain have my life a model of sincerity. I will cherish no base ambitions. I reject with loathing the impulse to go astray. I shall never be false to my better self, and I shall have nothing to do with evil.[2]

Vows to extirpate evil from the court and the land (5-8)

I will silence the lips of the slanderer. The haughty eyes and the proud heart I will not tolerate. But I shall look with favor upon the trusty and blameless, and bring them to my court, and make them my servants. But there will be no room there for traitors, and liars shall have no place among my attendants. Morning by morning I will destroy the godless, that wickedness may be rooted out of Jerusalem, the city of our God.

### 2. *A Prayer for a Just and Glorious Reign* (72)

Prayer that the king may be just and the champion of the oppressed (1-7)

O God, who art the source of justice, plant in the heart of the king the spirit of the justice that is thine, that he may justly judge thy down-trodden people, and that all through the land there may be peace on mountain and hill. May he help the down-trodden to their rights, and save the poor by crushing the oppressor in pieces. May he live as long as [3] the sun and the moon—for ages and

[1] "When wilt thou come to me?" (2b). If the text and translation of this clause are correct, it is not easy to see its relevance in this context.

[2] Most of the verbs in 1-4 may be taken as statements rather than as expressions of a wish.

[3] So the Greek version.

ages. May he refresh his people as the grass is refreshed by the rain from heaven—the showers of rain that water the earth. In his days may righteousness flourish and abundance of peace till the moon be no more.

His world-wide sovereignty (8-11)

May his sway extend from ocean to ocean,[1] and from the river [2] to the uttermost ends of the earth. May his enemies [3] bow the knee before him, may his foes fall down on their faces before him. May the Spanish [4] kings, and the isles of the inland sea, bring him tribute. May Arab and Ethiopian kings offer him gifts of allegiance. Yea, may all kings fall prostrate before him, and all peoples yield him their service.[5]

The justice, prosperity, and fame of his reign (12-17)

For he is the saviour of the poor when they cry—the saviour of the helpless and the down-trodden. He takes pity on those who are crushed and needy, saving their lives from oppression and violence; for he will not allow the blood of his innocent dear to be shed. Long may he [6] live and receive of Arabia's gold. Prayer shall be made

[1] Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean.

[2] Euphrates.

[3] Instead of "they that dwell in the wilderness."

[4] Tarshish, Tartessus, a Phœnician colony in Southern Spain.

[5] It has been acutely suggested that vv. 8-11, which somewhat break the connection between 7 and 12, are really a later interpolation, intended to celebrate the world-wide dominion of the king of 1-7,12 ff., who, of course, in later times, was understood to be the Messiah, though very possibly the original reference was to one of the historical kings.

[6] Not the poor: he, at any rate, had no gold to offer, unless with Wellhausen we assume that the poor are throughout the Jews.

for him ceaselessly : all the day long shall men bless him. May his land have plenty of corn ; even on the mountain tops may it wave like Lebanon. May the people in his cities be numberless and fair as the grass of the field. May his name live forever and ever, abiding as long as the sun shall shine, and may his prosperity be the wonder of nations [1] throughout the wide world.

## VI

### THE DOMINION OF THE KING

#### 1. *Universal Dominion Promised by Jehovah* (2)

World-rebellion against Jehovah's Messiah (1-3)

What folly ! Wherefore this ferment among the heathen, and these murmured schemings that can but come to nought? Kings and princes of earth against the King of heaven—plotting and preparing against Jehovah and his anointed king. " Let us," they say, " be their bondsmen no more. Away, away with the marks of our bondage."

Jehovah's mockery of the rebels (4-6)

From his throne in the heavens the Lord laughs and scoffs at the silly rebels. But soon his laughter will turn to furious indignation, and with these words he will confound them : " Fools ! it was I, yes I, who set the king whom ye have disowned, upon Zion my holy hill."

[1] Literally, " may they bless themselves in him." Cf. Gen. 12 : 3.

[2] The Greek version reads, " I was set by him upon Zion, his holy hill." The advantage of the Greek reading is that then vv. 6 and 7 are connected, and it is not necessary to assume any change of speaker.

Encouraged by Jehovah's word, thus speaks the anointed king: "I am king by Jehovah's decree; for 'thou art my son,' he said to me, 'I have made thee my son on this the day of thy crowning. Thine is the earth to its uttermost bounds. The heathen with their rebel kings are thine: I will give thee them all for the asking. Thou shalt crush them with thine iron sceptre, and dash them in pieces as lightly as a potter his vessels of clay.'" Jehovah's promise of victory and dominion to his anointed king (7-9)

Take to heart, then, ye kings and rulers, this decree of Jehovah: let it teach you the folly of rebellion, and lead you to serve him with fear and trembling.[1] Do homage to him,[2] lest in his indignation he destroy you, in the rebellious way on which ye have entered; for soon his anger will blaze out. Happy in that dread day shall be all whose refuge is in him. The rebels warned (10-12)

## 2. *The Divine Promise of Victory over all Foes* (110)

These are the words of the oracle which Jehovah has given me concerning my Lord the King. "Take[3] thy The promise of dominion (1-3)

[1] It may fairly be doubted whether the word "rejoice" is correct here (v. 11); perhaps we should emend to "writhe," by the change of a single letter.

[2] A great controversy has waged round the words usually rendered "kiss the son." For many reasons this translation is improbable, unsupported as it is by the Septuagint, which renders "gather admonition," and involving as it does a different word for "son" from that in v. 7. The above paraphrase represents the general sense. The "he" in the clause "lest he be angry" refers to Jehovah.

[3] It is a curious and interesting fact—whether significant or not it is hard to say—that the initial consonants of the lines 1b-4 spell the Hebrew word

place," he said to him, "at my right hand as my viceroy, and I will give thee the victory over thy foes, and lay them vanquished at thy feet to serve thee as a footstool. From the holy temple-hill thy God shall extend thy sway over the land, bidding thee have dominion over the foes who surround thee. On the day when the army marches forth, thy people offer thee willing service; thy youthful warriors, fresh as the dew of the early morning, flock to thy standards upon the holy hills[1] of Jerusalem.

The king is also to be priest (4)

Thou art priest as well as king; for Jehovah has sworn an inviolable oath, "Thou art priest forever after the manner of Melchizedek."[2]

The king-priest triumphant (5-7)

Jehovah will defend and strengthen his priestly king, and, in the day of his anger, when he comes in judgment, he will crush the heathen kings who oppose him. Israel's king too, will deal judgment among the heathen peoples, crushing the heads of his foes, and filling the broad fields with their corpses; and, as he pursues the retreating foe, he drinks of the brook by the way to refresh him, and gathers strength, and hastens on with head uplifted.

for Simon, who was proclaimed "leader and high priest for ever," and who secured temporary independence for Judæa by the capture of the citadel of Jerusalem (142 B. C.).

[1] Or "in holy attire" (so the text).

[2] That is either in being not hereditary, or in combining priestly with royal functions.

### 3. *Jehovah's Unceasing Care for His Servant, the King* (18) [1]

I will exalt [2] thee, Jehovah, my strength.

Prayer for deliverance from deadly peril (1-6)

Jehovah is both my refuge and my champion. In him, as in a high strong tower, I hide ; he shields and saves me from violence.[3] As soon as I utter the cry, "Praised be Jehovah," I am saved from the foe. The fearful billows of perdition surrounded me : like a huntsman, death caught me in the toils. In my distress, I shouted for help to Jehovah, my God, and my cry pierced his ears in heaven, and straightway he came to my help.

Jehovah appears in the storm and discomfits the enemy (7-20)

At his coming the earth quaked, the mountains shook. Dark angry clouds, edged with fiery red, began to lower in the sky. On the wind-driven cloud he flew down, hidden in the thick darkness of its waters—clouds that were charged with hail and fire.[4] Then came the thunder-peal, and flashes of deadly lightning, like arrows sped. In the angry storm, the bottom of the sea [5] and the foundations

[1] It is interesting and instructive to compare this psalm throughout with the other recension in 2 Sam. 22.

[2] Instead of "I will love thee," by a very simple change. "Love" is an expressive thought: whether it is natural here is another question. The verse does not occur in 2 Sam. 22.

[3] To v. 2 should probably be added from 2 Sam. 22:3 the line "my saviour, thou savest me from violence."

[4] "Hailstones and coals of fire" in 13c seems to be inadvertently repeated from 12b. It occurs only once in the Samuel passage.

[5] So 2 Sam. 22 : 16, instead of "waters" (v. 15).

of the earth were laid bare. This mighty God of the storm stretched down and drew me out of the billows [1] of my distress, and delivered me from the enemies who were too strong for me. On the day that they had meant to be my day of doom, he proved himself my stay, and in his love for me, he brought me out of my straits into a broad place, rewarding me thus for my piety and purity.

as a reward of the psalmist's integrity (21-24)

For I had kept his ways unswervingly, never turning aside from his commandments, but keeping myself blameless and sinless before him.

For God deals with men as they deserve (25-30)

For thou dost deal with men as they with thee—kind to the kind, and wayward to the wayward, saving the humble and humbling the proud. Yes, it is thou who art the light of my darkness. With thy help I tear down ramparts [2] and leap over walls. Yes, surely God is just and his promises are sure; he is the defence of all who put their trust in him.

He gives the psalmist victory over his foes and dominion over the world (31-45)

There is no God like Jehovah—the God who gives me strength and victory and fleetness of foot and skill in fight to bend a brazen bow. Thou art my defence and my saviour.[3] Thou dost enable me to take long swift strides,

[1] Cf. v. 4.

[2] By a simple change in the words rendered "run" and "troop" (v. 29).

[3] Literally: "thou givest me the shield of thy (Septuagint, my) salvation . . . and thy gentleness makes me great or many" (v. 35). Much doubt, however, attaches to the word rendered gentleness (*i.e.*, condescending love). It has been rendered "thy hearing of me" or "thy chastisement of me." Wellhausen emends and translates: thy *help*. Duhm emends both noun and verb: thy *buckler* protects me.

so that I can run mine enemies down to their doom, smiting them so that they rise no more. Thou givest me strength and victory: thou makest mine enemies turn their back and flee to their own destruction. They cried for help to thee, but there was none to hear or save, and I stamped them down like dust or mire. Thou dost deliver me in the wars my people wage,[1] and makest me lord of the world. Strange peoples do homage to me; even when they but hear of me, they come trembling out of their fortresses to offer me their cringing obedience.

Hail to Jehovah! blessed and exalted be the God who gives me victory and vengeance, delivering me from rebellious and violent men. In song will I praise his name among the heathen for the glorious victories he has wrought for his king, and the love he has shown to his anointed, to David and his seed for evermore. Blessed be he (46-50)

## VII

### YEARNING FOR THE MESSIANIC KING

### 1. *The Sure Promise to David* (89) [2]

Forever will I sing the praises of thy mercy and thy faithfulness, O our God. For, in accordance with thy The sure promise to David (1-4)

[1] "From the contentions of the people" (other versions: peoples, my people). The context suggests that this must be more than civil war.

[2] See note on Ps. 132 : 10 (p. 278).

promise to establish eternal as the heavens that mercy and faithfulness of thine, thou didst make a sworn covenant with thy servant David, to build his throne and to establish his descendants upon it forever.

The angels praise the incomparable Jehovah, who is strong and just (5-14)

Then the praises of thy marvellous kindness to David and Israel rang through the heavens from the lips of the holy angels round about thy throne; for thou art the Lord of them all, and among them there is none to compare with thee, the God majestic and terrible. O Jehovah, God of hosts, who is strong like thee? For it was thou who didst master the great primeval sea, and still the proud waves thereof. It was thou who didst crush the monster Rahab to pieces and scatter thy foes by thy mighty arm.[1] And after thy victory, thou didst show thyself mighty to create. For sky and earth and all that is therein are thine: it was thou who didst found them. North and south are thy creation, and the giant mountains [2] shouted the praises of thy handiwork. Thou art just, too, and merciful, as thou art mighty. Thy throne is supported on law and order, and love and faithfulness are thine angel attendants.

Happy is Israel with such a God (15-18)

O how happy is Israel that can call such a God her own and greet him with glad festal shouts! With the light of thy gracious face upon them, O our God, they shall walk unrestrained, rejoicing in thee continually and exalting thy

[1] V. 9 ff. For a very similar reference to creation, cf. 74 : 13 ff. (p. 239).
[2] Like the stars : cf. Job 38 : 7.

righteousness; for thou art our strength in whom we glory, and thy favor will lift us to honor. For thou, the holy God of Israel, hast the king, our defender, in thy keeping.[1]

Ancient promise of Jehovah to David (19-29)

In those days[2] thou didst appear to thy holy prophet,[3] and utter these solemn words: "From among the people I have found a heroic youth, even David my servant, and raised him above them all to the place of honor, setting a crown[4] upon his head, and anointing him with holy oil, and I will protect him and strengthen him, so that no wicked enemy shall ever assail or afflict him. His foes I will smite and crush before him. My faithfulness and love shall attend him, and lift him to high honor, and I will extend his sway from the sea to the distant Euphrates.[5] He shall call me his father, his God, and his mighty helper; and I, on my part, will make him my first born son, highest among earth's kings. My covenant of love I will steadfastly keep with him forever, making his throne endure as the heavens, and maintaining his descendants upon it forever.

[1] V. 18. Literally, "For to Jehovah belongs our shield, and to the holy one of Israel our king." The king belongs ideally to Jehovah, though at present Israel has none. The translation "Jehovah is our king" is easier, but not correct.

[2] Cf. vv. 3, 4. The passage rests on 2 Sam. 7.

[3] "Thy godly one;" apparently Nathan is meant.

[4] Instead of "help," by the change of a single letter (cf. v. 39).

[5] Cf. 72 : 8.

Disobedience, though it would be punished, would not frustrate the promise (30-37)

If his children profane my law by disobedience, I will punish their sin with stripes from the rod; but from him I will not withdraw my love or my loyalty. I will not profane my covenant by altering the word that I have spoken —the solemn inviolable oath that I swore to David. There shall never be wanting a man to sit upon his throne; it shall endure as long as[1] the sun or the moon or the heavens."

The present evil plight. Has God forgotten his promise? (38-45)

Such was thy promise;[2] but ah! now thou hast cast us off in contempt, and hast shown thine anger against thine anointed servant, spurning thy covenant with him, and dashing his sacred crown to the ground. Thou hast made breaches in his walls, and laid his bulwarks in ruins, so that the neighbors jeer, and rob him as they pass by. Thou hast suffered his enemies to taste the joy of victory over him: thou hast turned back his sword from the foe and left him prostrate on the field of battle. Thou hast robbed him of his splendor,[3] and overwhelmed him with shame and grief and made him old before his time.

Prayer to Jehovah to remember and save (46-51)

How long, O our God, wilt thou hide thyself? will thine anger flame forever? Remember, O Lord, what life is, and how pathetic[4] is the end of man; for where is the

[1] The word rendered "witness" in v. 37 should probably be rendered "forever." This would involve no change in the consonants.

[2] Cf. v. 19.

[3] Or perhaps "sceptre," by emendation, v. 44. (Baethgen.)

[4] Literally, "for what nothingness." Wellhausen translates: On what fleeting foundations thou hast created mankind! (v. 47).

man that escapes the hand of Sheol and never sees death? O then, since death is so sure, wilt thou not be merciful, and fulfil right speedily the gracious promise which of old thou didst solemnly swear to David? Remember how thy servants are reviled, bearing in their bosom the scorn of nations many. O remember the bitter, bitter insults with which thine enemies pursue the steps of thine anointed.

### 2. *The Certainty of the Fulfilment of the Promise to David* (132)

Prayer for the Davidic dynasty (1)

Be gracious to us, O our God, for the sake of thy servant David, and remember all the trouble that he bore till he found a dwelling-place for thee.

David's vow to build Jehovah a house (2-5)

Remember how he swore[1] never to enter his house or sleep upon his bed till he had found a place for Israel's God to dwell in.

The proposal to carry the ark to Zion (6-9)

See! we went to Kirjath-jearim in the district of Ephrathah,[2] where we heard that it was, and there we found it. We said, "Let us go to his house, and humbly bow before him, and beseech him to enter and dwell there. Arise,"[3] we sang, "O Jehovah, and enter thy place of rest, thou and thine ark victorious. Let thy priests wear robes of salvation, and thy people sing for joy."

[1] No such vow is recorded in the existing historical books.

[2] Cf. the genealogical statement of this relationship in 1 Chron. 2 : 50. For the incident alluded to here, cf. 1 Sam. 7 : 1, 2, and 2 Sam. 6 : 2-4.

[3] Cf. Num. 10 : 35.

Jehovah's vow to establish and maintain the throne of David (10-18)

O remember thy servant David, and for his sake reject not thine anointed;[1] but fulfil the inviolable oath that thou didst graciously sware to David in answer to the oath that he sware to thee.[2] "A son of thine"—so thou didst swear to him—"will I set upon thy throne, and descendants of thine shall be on thy throne forever, if only they keep the commandments I teach them: for Zion is the home of mine own choice, the place where I have vowed to dwell forever. I will nourish her richly and give food in abundance to her poor. I will clothe her priests with robes of salvation, and put songs of joy in the mouth of her saints. In the holy city I will lift to honor a scion of the line of David mine anointed, and I will continue his line forever. I will clothe his enemies in robes of shame, but on his head I will set a glittering crown."

[1] Most probably, in this connection, some other than David. Some suppose that the people are intended, but the reference is more likely to be to a person. Graetz and Sellin suppose the subject of this psalm and Psalm 89 to be Zerubbabel.

[2] Cf. v. 2.

# PSALMS CONCERNING THE UNIVERSAL REIGN OF JEHOVAH

# PSALMS CONCERNING THE UNIVERSAL REIGN OF JEHOVAH

## I

### INTRODUCTION

Whatever the fate of the earthly monarchy might be, Israel always felt herself to be under the sovereignty of an invisible king, and, however the dreams of an earthly kingdom might be dashed by the hard facts, the Kingdom of Jehovah was sure to come. There were times, too, when it actually came "with observation,"—when not only could Israel say, "Jehovah has done great things for us," but when even the heathen were constrained to admit that "Jehovah had done great things for them" (126 : 2); and those days were partly a fulfilment and partly a prophecy of the golden days when Jehovah was to show himself king over all the earth, claiming and receiving the homage of a converted world. More than most nations the Hebrews had the genius for seeing the universal in the particular; and through the lines of the brilliant and impetuous lyrics, which celebrate some great, though temporary triumph, we catch clear glimpses of the latter days, when God shall be all in all.

These psalms, with their large outlook upon a coming judgment of the nations and a cloudless future for Israel, doubtless find their origin, like other psalms, in definite historical occasions. The numerous points of contact between these psalms and the latter part of Isaiah render it probable that this "new song" was the song sung by the Jews, when their deliverance from exile was an accomplished fact. They throb with the joy of a real redemption, besides pointing to a larger redemption to come. The nations were amazed, and Zion was glad (97 : 8), and nature is called upon to share in the general joy (98 : 7, 8).

Jehovah, who ushers in this blessed kingdom, does so in virtue of his power and of his character. He is the glorious and terrible God (97 : 2-5), creator and sustainer of all things, lord of sea and land, valleys and hills (95 : 4, 5 ; 93 : 4 ; 96 : 4). History has made it plain that no god can be compared to him (95 : 3 ; 96 : 4 ; 97 : 9) ; and this omnipotence he has exercised on behalf of Israel whom he loves and shepherds (100) by saving her beyond all human expectation.

"Jehovah has made known his power to help,
His righteousness [that is, his vindication of Israel] he hath
openly showed in the sight of the nations:
He hath remembered his love and his faithfulness
Toward the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
The help our God has given" (98 : 2, 3)

The ultimate result of this interposition of Jehovah, which is so obvious as to be undeniable even by the heathen themselves, is that they too are to be brought to the recognition of Israel's God, and to join with Israel in the spontaneous worship of him. Occasionally it is suggested that the homage is to be effected by force (47 : 3), but often it is represented as due to the compulsion of a genuine conviction inspired by the marvel of Israel's deliverance (98 : 3, 4). But whether due to compulsion or conviction, the result is to be that Jehovah will be king over all the earth, and his praises sung by every nation (99 : 2, 3 ; 100 : 1, 2). To appreciate the real spiritual significance of this vision of a worshipping world, we have to remember the character of the divine king who was thus worshipped. His love for Israel was no partial or arbitrary love. His tender mercies are over all his works, and he satisfies the desire of every living thing (145 : 9, 16). His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom because it is established on justice. "He executes justice for the oppressed . . . and turns the way of the wicked upside down" (146 : 7, 9 f.). This, then, was the brave and brilliant hope to which Israel lifted her spirit at the sight of her own historical redemption—a world of faithful worshippers responding with gladness to the salvation of her national God, the only God in all the earth.

## JEHOVAH'S UNIVERSAL REIGN

### 1. *Its Universal Acknowledgment* (47)

Jehovah is king over all (1, 2)

Clap your hands for joy, all ye peoples, and send up glad shouts to Israel's God, most high and dread; for he is the great king of the whole world.

His beneficence might shown now as in the past (3-5)

Once in the early days he made nations subject to Israel, choosing for our inheritance the goodly land of Canaan, Israel's pride and delight; so now he has returned to his sanctuary as victor accompanied by the piercing notes of the trumpet.

Acknowledged even by foreign nations to be lord of the world (6-9)

Sing praises, then, to our God and King again and yet again. For our God is king over all the earth; sing to him a skilful song. His reign over all the nations has begun. He has taken his seat on his holy throne. Foreign nobles are joining the people [1] of Jehovah, Israel's ancient God; for they [2] all are his. He is greatly exalted.

[1] V. 9. "Gather *with* the people," if we assume, which is probable, that the word *with* has fallen out before the word *people*: the two words have the same consonantal outline in the Hebrew. If the text, however, be correct, it would assert that these foreigners were themselves a people of Jehovah—which would indeed be very great and almost without a parallel in the Old Testament (cf. Mal. 1 : 11).

[2] The shields, that is, probably the nobles just mentioned. Wellhausen translates: For to God, our shield, belongs the world.

### 2. *Jehovah's Supremacy Unquestionable* (93)

The contest [1] is over : Jehovah is victor. He has taken his seat upon the throne, robed in majesty, and girt with might. Now the world stands firm and immovable. From that hour of the victory thy throne was established, and for all time it shall abide. Again and yet again did the floods lift up their angry voices ; but with a majesty above that of the great roaring waters, with a majesty above that of the wild breakers of the sea, majestic in the height stood Jehovah.

Jehovah is victor and therefore king (1-4)

All that our God ordains is unerringly fulfilled—the ruin of his foes and the triumph of his kingdom. To this end he will preserve his holy temple ; it shall be inviolate forever.

His purposes sure and his temple inviolable (4)

### 3. *The Establishment of his Universal Sway* (96)

Let all the world bless the name of Israel's God and sing to him such a song as has never been sung before. Daily proclaim throughout the world the glorious tidings of his marvellous victory. For great is he, and worthy of all praise ; there is no god so terrible as he. All other nations have idols for gods, but Israel's God is the creator of

Praise to Jehovah the great and glorious (1-6)

[1] Duhm, interpreting the references to the sea literally, takes the contest to be that of Jehovah with the great primeval sea of chaos, to which there are undoubtedly other references in the Psalter (74 : 13 ff. ; 89 : 9 ff.).

the universe. Majesty and splendor, glory and might, attend upon him in his heavenly sanctuary.

Jehovah to receive the homage of the world (7-9)

Ascribe to him, ye peoples all, yea, glory and might ascribe[1] to him; for these are his due. Come into the courts of his temple with offerings in your hands. Kneel ye before him in holy array, and tremble as ye kneel.

Universal gladness at Jehovah's righteous rule (10-12)

Proclaim across the world that Jehovah is now on his throne. The world is fixed—to be shaken no more. Let all be glad in his presence—heaven and earth and roaring sea, field and forest and all that is therein. For he is coming, coming to judge the earth, to establish his righteous sway among the nations, and usher in the Messianic age.

### 4. *The Joint Homage of Nature and Man* (98)[2]

Universal praise to Jehovah from men and nature for his redemption of Israel (1-9)

Sing to Jehovah such a song as ye have never sung before: for, by his own peerless might, he has won a marvellous victory which has made it plain to all the world how he defends his people; for, to its furthest ends, the world has seen how mindful and true Jehovah has been to his love for Israel, his ancient people. So let the whole earth hail Jehovah as king with glad noise of shouting and music upon cithern and harp and trumpet and horn. Let

[1] Vv. 7, 8 modelled on 29 : 1, 2.

[2] This psalm is printed immediately after 96, because it has much in common with it—the appeal to nature, and the assertion of the coming judgment.

nature, too, join in the glad acclaim—the earth, with all her people, the roaring sea, with all that is therein, river and mountain—let them exult for joy in the presence of Jehovah ; for he is coming, coming to judge the earth, to establish his righteous sway among the nations, and usher in the Messianic age.

### 5. *The Assurance of Judah's Security* (97)

Let earth with her many isles be glad, for Jehovah has begun to reign. He is girt about with dark storm-clouds : his throne is supported on justice and right. Jehovah's glorious advent (1-7)

Before and about him leaped the deadly lightning which lit the world, and made it quake with terror at the sight. Mountains melted like wax at the presence of this Lord of all the world. Earth and heaven were smitten with wonder. The nations of the world beheld his glory ; the heavens above proclaimed the justice of his rule, and all the gods fell down prostrate before him.[1]

The sound of the storm,[2] which heralded thy righteous rule, filled with gladness Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah. For thou, O God of Israel, art assuredly most high over all the earth : no God has shown such power as thine. The joy of Judah (8, 9)

For toward thy dear ones, who abhor what is evil,

[1] Cheyne transposes 7 and 8. In the present order of the verses, the relevance of 7*a*, *b* is not obvious.

[2] The storm, described in the preceding verses in terms borrowed from the theophany at Sinai, is probably a figure for the fall of Babylon.

The security and gladness of Jehovah's people (10-12)

thou dost cherish a love that is omnipotent, and dost save them completely from the power of the godless. When their way is dark and joyless, light and gladness arise upon it. O be glad, then, ye righteous, in Jehovah, and praise his holy name.

### 6. *Jehovah's Just and Holy Rule* (99)

Praise to Jehovah for his great victory (1-5)

The God of Israel, throned upon cherubs, has begun to reign; let earth and all her peoples tremble. Zion is his throne; there he is great and high over all the nations of the earth. Praised be his great and awful name: for holy is he. Thou art a king who loves justice.[1] Thou hast established order, and for[2] thy people thou hast executed a judgment that is just.

Exalt then Jehovah our God, and fall down in worship before his footstool on Zion; for holy is he.[3]

He still hears and answers men of prayer, and forgives for their sake (6-9)

Among his priests are Moses and Aaron, and Samuel is among those who call upon his name; and the influence of those heroes of ancient times lives on. Their spirit is still present to-day among priests and worshippers, and that presence guarantees an answer to their prayers.

[1] V. 4a is difficult. Literally: "The strength of the king loves (or who loves) judgment." But in 4c at any rate, and with almost equal certainty in 4b, the "thou" refers to Jehovah. Besides, throughout this group of psalms, Jehovah himself is king. This may justify Wellhausen in emending and translating as above.

[2] Literally, in Jacob. The judgment is probably the fall of Babylon.

[3] Note the refrain in v. 9; cf. also 3b "Holy is he."

Still in the pillar of cloud Jehovah speaks to those who keep the commandments he gave them.[1] Yea, surely, O Jehovah our God, thou dost give them an answer, and dost show thyself a forgiving God, who lettest their sins go unpunished.[2]

Exalt then Jehovah our God, and fall down in worship before his holy hill; for holy is he.

### 7. *Jehovah the Creator and Ruler of his People* (95)

Praise to Jehovah as creator and shepherd (1-7b)

Come and let us raise a ringing shout of praise to the mighty God who has saved us. In his presence let us express our thanks with songs and instruments of music; for there is no God like our God, who is greater than all and king over all. He is the sustainer, as he is the creator of all things—sea and land, depths of the earth and heights of the hills. O come let us bow in worship and bend the knee before him; for this great God who made the world made us also. He is our God, and not only our God but our shepherd, who tenderly cares for us his sheep.

"O that[3] in the light of all this goodness, ye would

[1] The interpretation of these verses is very difficult. Possibly they are a retrospect of the early history, and the verbs in the translation should all be in the past tense. But in connection with vv. 1-5 it seems best to refer them to the present.

[2] By an emendation of Hitzig. In the present text 8c seems almost to contradict 8b. Duhm reads, "who avenges attacks upon them."

[3] Some think that a new psalm begins here. The general impression left by this part is certainly very different from that of the first; but the difference is perhaps not greater than in certain other psalms (cf. 22, 40, etc.).

Jehovah's warning against repeating the apostasy of the past (7c-11)

listen to my[1] voice to-day, not hardening your hearts against my love, as in the old days, once and again, in the wilderness,[2] where your unbelieving fathers put me to the test, notwithstanding the works which they saw. Forty long years did I bear with abhorrence that wicked generation, and upon them I was constrained to pronounce the doom of exclusion from Canaan : for wandering hearts had they, and they did not understand my gracious ways. So in mine anger I solemnly swore that they should never enter the land of rest."

### 8. *Jehovah the one Gracious Lord of All* (100)[3]

Praise to Jehovah, the only God, for his undying love (1-5)

Let all the world hail Israel's God with a shout of joy. Come and worship in his presence with shouts of gladness. Acknowledge that Israel's God is the only God. It is he that has made us and his we are ;[4] we are his people and he is our shepherd. As ye enter the courts of his temple, lift up the voice of thanks, and praise and bless his name. For Jehovah is good, his love and faithfulness are everlasting.

[1] If, with the text, we read "his," the clause will go with 1-7b.

[2] Cf. Exodus 17 : 1-7.

[3] Ps. 100 is printed immediately after Ps. 95, as they have much in common ; cf. in particular, 95 : 7 and 100 : 3.

[4] Instead of "he made us, and not we," should be read, "he made us and his we are." The Hebrew words for "not" and "to him" have the same sound (v. 3).

### 9. *Zion, Jehovah's City, the Universal Mother* (87) [1]

Jerusalem, the city of Jehovah, is founded upon holy mountains, the chief of which is Zion; therefore that city is dearer to him than all other cities of Israel. O holy city, glorious is the word that thy God has spoken of thee. For this is what he says:

Zion is in a special sense the city of Jehovah (1-3)

"In all the world there are those that worship me and call themselves my sons. In the countries of thine ancient foes, Egypt [2] the proud and Babylon the cruel, are numbered some that know me. See! in lands far and near are the children of Zion—in Philistia and Tyre and distant Ethiopia. They all call Zion mother,[3] every one, and count themselves her children—citizens of the city kept by the most high God." In his Book of the Nations, Jehovah records them as natives of Zion.

All the world over, men will call Zion mother (4-7)

Ah! surely they must break into singing and dancing —all who have thee, O Zion, for a home.[4]

[1] Jerusalem is to be the metropolis of the kingdom of God: hence Ps. 87 is fittingly placed in this group.

[2] The proper names of the psalm are names of recent or ancient enemies of Israel. The reference is probably to proselytes, but might possibly be to Jews living in those countries.

[3] So the Greek version.

[4] The last verse is extremely difficult, and its meaning quite uncertain, though no doubt the above paraphrase represents the general temper of the verse. It rests in part on a suggestion of the Septuagint, and connects well with the rest of the psalm. Others believe the meaning to be that the singers are at this point to sing the anthem, "All my sources are in thee."

# THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

# THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

## I

### INTRODUCTION

The Book of Lamentations is graphic and definite beyond most of the lyrical compositions of the Old Testament. It introduces us to scenes of pathos and horror—the glory of Israel lying in the dust, her palaces destroyed, her temple desecrated, her women eating their own children for very hunger. In spite of a recent attempt to refer the last two chapters to the miseries of the Maccabean times (about 170 B. C.) opinion is practically unanimous that in this book we have five poems composed by way of lamentation over the fallen fortunes of the people and the city of Jerusalem after its siege and capture by Nebuchadrezzar in 586 B. C.

A very old tradition ascribes the composition of the book to Jeremiah, though it has no ascription at all in the Hebrew Bible. In the Greek text, the book is prefaced with these words: "And it came to pass, after the captivity of Israel and the desolation of Jerusalem, that Jeremiah sat down weeping and lifted up this lament over

Jerusalem and said." Earlier still we find in Second Chronicles 35 : 25 an allusion to certain lamentations of Jeremiah over Josiah, which look—though we cannot be certain—as if the compiler of Chronicles referred our present Book of Lamentations to Jeremiah. If he did so, he must have seen in 4 : 20 an allusion to King Josiah, whereas the reference is almost certainly to Zedekiah. This early conjecture of authorship is far from unnatural. Two of the poems at any rate (chapters 2 and 4) were obviously written by an eyewitness, and the book is distinctly composed in the prophetic spirit, which regards the calamity as the consequence of sin (1 : 5, 8); and the prophet himself has been thought to be "the man" who had seen affliction (3 : 1). Besides, the tender love for the city and its people that breathes through the elegies is quite in the spirit of the prophet who wrote :

> O that my head were waters,
> And mine eyes a fountain of tears,
> That I might weep day and night,
> For the slain of the daughter of my people (Jer. 9 : 1).

But there is much to be said on the other side. The statement that Jeremiah is the author of the book does not appear in the Hebrew text, and it is easier to suppose that it was added by the Greek version than that it was lost from the Hebrew. It is also very significant that, though in the Greek version, followed by the Latin and the English, the Book of Lamentations is placed after Jeremiah, in

the Hebrew Bible it is not so connected with that prophet's book, but appears by itself among the "Writings," or third division of the Old Testament canon. Further, although the Lamentations offer many parallels both of thought and expression to Jeremiah, there are other thoughts and expressions quite unlike his. For example, the view of the catastrophe as due to the sins *of the fathers* (5 : 7) is not Jeremiah's, nor could he possibly have referred to the vacillating Zedekiah as "the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of Jehovah . . . of whom we said, 'Under his shadow we shall live among the nations'" (4 : 20). The "man who had seen affliction" (3 : 1) is no doubt not Jeremiah, but the community, which, in verses 40-47, speaks in the plural number. Again, it would hardly seem natural that the deep grief of Jeremiah should have uttered itself in the somewhat formal and elaborate fashion of alphabetic poems; men do not write acrostics when their hearts are breaking. As the two poems (chapters 2 and 4) which could, with most probability, on other grounds be assigned to him, seem to depend upon Ezekiel,[1] we may conclude that there are no convincing grounds for the view that Jeremiah wrote the book, and that there is a very high probability against it.

Indeed the question may be fairly raised whether the

[1] Cf. 2 : 14 with Ez. 22 : 28; Lam. 2 : 1 with Ez. 43 : 7; Lam. 2 : 4 with Ez. 24 : 16, 21, 25; Lam. 4 : 20 with Ez. 19 : 24.

five poems all come from the same hand. The structure of the different poems varies considerably. The first four are written in the qinah or elegiac metre, in which the second line is a little shorter than the first—usually three beats followed by two. In the last poem this metre is dropped, no doubt because it is not an elegy but a prayer. The first four poems are alphabetic, while the fifth is not, though it can be no accident that the number of verses in it coincides with the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. But even the first four poems exhibit considerable differences among themselves. In the first, second, and fourth, each letter of the alphabet has a single verse; in the third, three consecutive verses begin with the same letter. In the first and second poems, each verse contains three elegiacs; in the third, one; and in the fourth, two. In the first poem, the letters appear in the customary order of the Hebrew alphabet; in the second, third, and fourth, Pi precedes Ayin (as if P in English were to precede O). This variety is not absolutely inconsistent with unity of authorship, but it certainly rather looks the other way. And this suspicion is confirmed on closer examination; for the second and fourth poems stand out from the others in portraying the horrors of the siege with especial vividness, while the first and fifth, though also charged with sorrow, contemplate the original calamity from a greater distance. The third poem again is the most artificial, the least impressive, and probably the latest of all.

It is quite impossible to determine the date more than approximately. Chapters 2 and 4 are so graphic as to look almost like a transcript by an eye-witness; but the choice of an alphabetic arrangement, with its quasi-didactic purpose, suggests that the first burst of wild grief had been for some time spent. The original sorrow, while doubtless still poignantly felt, was yet far enough away to be elevated into something like an object of contemplation. Chapters 1 and 5 are still more remote. In accordance with this view, Löhr assigns chapters 2 and 4, roughly speaking, to 570 B. C., and 1 and 5 to 530 B. C. Chapter 3 is, in all probability, still later—how late we cannot tell.

## II

### EARLIER LAMENTS OVER THE SORROWS OF JERUSALEM (2 and 4)

### 1. *The Divine Judgment and the Inconsolable Sorrow* (2)

The sorrow and suffering of Jerusalem are a divine judgment (1-10)

Alas! how thick is the cloud in which the Lord is enwrapping the people of Zion. He hurls to the ground the glory[1] of Israel, and in the day of his wrath, he remembers not his holy house.[2] The open land of Judah he has

[1] Either in a general sense, or, more particularly, the temple.

[2] His footstool (v. 1); either the ark (cf. 1 Chron. 28 : 2), or, more generally, the temple.

ruthlessly consumed, and her fortresses he has dashed to the ground in his anger ; her king and her princes he has brought to dishonor. In his hot anger he has hewn Israel's strength to pieces : he protects them no more from the foe. He rages in Judah like a consuming fire. He takes his stand and bends his bow like an enemy, and slays all the lovely maidens and men of Zion, pouring out his anger like fire in her dwellings. The Lord has become Judah's foe, he has destroyed her utterly—her people, palaces, and fortresses—and moaning and bemoaning he has given her in sad abundance. The booth he has destroyed like the vine.[1] He has blotted out the memory of the sacred festivals, like the temple at which they were held. King and priests, despite their sanctity, he has rejected in his anger. He has spurned his own altar, and made its holy place unholy, giving over its walls and buildings to the foe, who have raised shouts in the temple like the shouts on a day of festival. He has determined to destroy the walls of Jerusalem, and he destroys inexorably, causing wall and bulwark to lament together. The city gates are buried in the dust, the bars are broken to pieces. King and princes are in a heathen land, priests are no more, prophets are without a vision from Jehovah. The old men sit in silence on the ground, with dust on their heads, and sackcloth on

[1] V. 6. So the Greek version. The meaning would be : he has destroyed temple and people alike. The people are often compared to a vine (cf. Is. 1 : 8 ; Ps. 80 : 8 ff.).

their loins, with no word of counsel to offer ; the maidens hang their heads in shame to the ground.

The sorrow, shame and distress of the city are utter and inconsolable (11-17)

Mine eyes are weary with weeping. My heart is throbbing, and my life is poured out to the earth, because of the ruin of my people. Babes and little children are fainting away in the streets of the city. "O give us bread," the children say to their mothers as they swoon in the streets like the wounded in battle, and the babes gasp forth their last breath on their mothers' bosom. There is no fate that can be compared to thine, no sorrow so inconsolable as thine, O daughter of Zion : thy wound is incurable—vast as the sea. Empty and foolish have been the visions of thy prophets. Had they faithfully disclosed to thee thy sin, they might have saved thee from captivity ; but they have uttered false prophecies, which have brought about thy banishment. In malice and contempt every wayfarer claps his hands at thee, hissing and shaking his head. "Is this," they say, "the city of peerless beauty, the joy of the whole earth?"[1] Thine enemies have opened their cruel mouths wide against thee, hissing and gnashing their teeth. "We have swallowed her up," they say. "Yes! this is the day that we have longed for. Happy are we that we have lived to see it." Jehovah has kept his word—the word that he long ago spoke through the prophets! He has made the hearts of thine enemies proud and glad by tearing thee down relentlessly.

[1] Ps. 50 : 2 ; 48 : 2.

The city's supplication (18-22)

Cry [1] aloud to the Lord, O virgin daughter of Zion. Day and night let torrents of tears roll down thy cheeks. Weep without ceasing. When the night-watch begins, and all the world is sleeping, rise thou and cry, and, with hands uplifted, pour out thy tearful plaint before the Lord for the death of thy little children. Look, O my God, and see on whom thy heavy hand has fallen—innocent women and children, sacred priests and prophets—women devouring their darling children, priests and prophets slaughtered in the holy place, old and young lying on the streets, youths and maidens perished by the sword, slain, slaughtered by thee on the day of thy pitiless anger. For safety they streamed from the villages [2] round about to the holy city as on a day of festival, but not one escaped on the day of thine anger. The darling children whom I brought up, were destroyed by the foe.

### 2. *The Fate of the People and their Leaders* (4)

The fate of the people (1-6)

Ah me! how has the fine gold of the temple been swept by the fire and lost its lustre, and its stones been poured out at every street corner.[3] The people of Zion, once more precious than gold, are counted as worthless as the fragments of a broken vessel. Even monsters suckle their

[1] Emended text.

[2] Or, thou hast summoned the things that affright me (v. 22).

[3] V. 1 may be taken literally of the temple (v. 2 referring to the people of Jerusalem) or metaphorically (v. 2 being regarded as the explanation).

young, but the women of Jerusalem are become cruel as the ostrich of the desert.[1] The children are dying of hunger and thirst. The tongue of the sucking child cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst, and there is no one to offer the little children the bread for which they crave. Those who lounged upon scarlet couches, and whose fare was dainty, are perishing upon the streets, and lying beside the dung-heaps. For as Jerusalem's sin was worse than Sodom's—that wicked city that was overthrown in a moment[2]—so was her punishment more severe.

The fate of the princes (7-11)

Her noblemen[3] were utterly disfigured. The dazzling whiteness of[4] their visage was transformed into the murkiest blackness. Their skin, which was red like coral, shrivelled upon their bones—dry as wood. They passed up the streets, and no one knew them—so changed were they. Fearful as is death by the sword, it is better than death by hunger—pining away like[5] the fruits of the field. The pitiful women have cooked and eaten their own children in the sore distress of Jerusalem. Jehovah has spent his full fury on Zion, kindling within her a fire which has devoured her, even to the very foundation.

[1] For the ostrich, cf. Job 39 : 13-16.

[2] The precise meaning of the last clause of v. 6 is very doubtful.

[3] Literally, Nazirites. cf. Gen. 49 : 26 ; Deut. 33 : 16.

[4] The end of v. 7 is obscure; their figure (or perhaps hair) shone like a sapphire (?).

[5] Or, for want of.

The fate of the priests and the prophets (13-16)

All[1] because of the sins of the prophets and priests, who shed innocent blood in Jerusalem; and with the blood-stains upon them they wander recklessly about the streets, touching the people with their garments. "Away, away, unclean: touch no one," cried the angry citizens; for no more durst they tarry in the land they had polluted.[2] So God in his anger would look upon them no more; priests and prophets both—he has scattered them pitilessly among the nations.

The fate of the king (12, 17-20)

It never dawned upon the kings or nations of the earth that an enemy would pass through the gates of Jerusalem.[3] But oh! how long did we strain our weary eyes in vain from the watch-tower for the help of the people who brought no help. Our enemies watched us so narrowly that we dared not appear in the streets. Our days are numbered, the end is near. Our enemies were swifter in their pursuit than the eagles, hunting us down on mountain and wilderness. Most pitiful of all, the very king was captured, Jehovah's anointed, the breath of our life—the king under whose protection we had hoped, even in exile, to live.

[1] V. 12, which interrupts the connection, is placed here because of the exigencies of the alphabetic arrangement: an *l* stanza was needed at this point. It has been transferred in the paraphrase to the next section, where it more properly belongs.

[2] The text of v. 15 is difficult, and probably faulty.

[3] The preservation of Jerusalem and the temple during Sennacherib's invasion of Judah (701 B. C.) had given rise to the belief that they were inviolable (cf. Jer. 7 : 4).

Take your fill of joy, ye Edomites[1] of Uz.[2] It will come your turn, too, to drink the cup, and in your helpless drunken state, ye shall be the victims of insult. As surely as the guilt of Zion is punished and blotted out, and her God will no more carry her to exile, so surely will he disclose your guilt, ye Edomites, and punish you.

The sure doom of Edom (21, 22)

## III

### LATER LAMENTS OVER THE SORROWS OF JERUSALEM (1 and 5)

#### 1. *The Comfortless Doom* (1)

Ah me! how lonely she sits, she that was once full of people! Like a woman whose husband is dead is she become, she that once was mighty among the nations; she that once was princess among the provinces is become a vassal. Bitterly she weeps in the night, her cheeks are stained with tears; there is not one of her lovers to comfort her. All her friends[3] have played the traitor and turned foe. From the misery of siege and warfare Judah has passed to the misery of exile. Her home is in a heathen land, and she finds no rest; all her persecutors

Lament over Jerusalem bereft by the siege of its glory and worship (1-11)

[1] Cf. Ps. 137: 7.

[2] A district whose bounds are difficult to determine; it was, at any rate, east of Israel, possibly bordering on N. Arabia. It was the home of Job.

[3] Egypt is no doubt chiefly referred to (v. 2).



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overtake her in the midst of her distress. The highways that lead to Jerusalem make lamentation, because no pilgrims to the festivals are seen upon them, nor do any pass through the gates of the city. Her priests sigh, her maidens are dragged away,[1] and oh! bitterness is hers. Her foes are her masters, success is theirs; Jehovah has suffered them to afflict Jerusalem because of her many sins, and to drive her little ones into captivity. The glory is vanished from the people of Zion. Her princes are like harts that are hungry and too weak to escape the pursuer.[2] She calls to mind the days of her misery,[3] when her people fell into the hands of the enemy, with no one to save, while the foe feasted their mocking eyes upon her desolation. It is because of her sin that Jerusalem has become a filthy abomination.[4] The friends who honored her despise her now, because they have seen her nakedness; and she, unhappy, turns back with a sigh. Her uncleanness is in her skirts. She gave no thought to the days to come; so her fall was terrible, and unredeemed by a word of consolation. O look, my God, upon the misery that I suffer from my haughty foe; for he has laid his unholy hands upon the treasures of palaces and temple. Yes, she has had to see her holy temple entered by peo-

[1] Or—though less probably—grieved (v. 4).

[2] The particular allusion is doubtless to Zedekiah's flight (Jer. 39: 4, 5).

[3] V. 7b, which, besides being an echo of other passages, makes the verse too long, should probably be omitted.

[4] Cf. Lev. 15: 19f.

ples whom thou hadst forbidden to set foot therein.[1] In their search for bread, the people are sighing. They have parted with their precious things for food to revive their fainting spirits. O look, and see, my God, how I am despised.

The city herself laments her bitter and comfortless doom (12-22)

I appeal to you,[2] all ye that pass by, to look and see if ever there was sorrow like the sorrow Jehovah has laid upon me in the day of his hot anger. From heaven he has hurled down fire upon me. He has caught my feet in a net so that I could not escape my pursuers. He has made me solitary and sick. His watchful eyes have been upon my sins; he has woven them together like strands of a cord into a heavy yoke for my neck,[3] and then, having crippled my strength, he has given me over to a foe irresistible. My mighty men he has scorned; he has proclaimed a festival for the annihilation of my young men. The daughters of Judah have been trodden under foot like grapes in the wine-press. At the sight of these things, tears roll down my cheeks; for there is no one near to revive me with comfort. My children are desolate, for the foe is mighty. Zion stretches out her helpless hands; but there is none to comfort. Her God has ordained that her neighbors should be her foes; she is among them as

[1] In Deut. 23 : 3, 4 the Moabites and Ammonites are excluded; in Ezek. 44 : 9, all foreigners.

[2] The beginning of the verse is very difficult in the Hebrew; but this much is fairly clear, that the obscure words are intended to strengthen the appeal.

[3] The meaning of 14a, b is obscure.

an abomination. Jehovah is just, I have been rebellious. I appeal to all the world to look upon my sorrow. My young men and maidens have been swept into exile. I called to my friends, but they have not kept faith. Priests and elders in the city are dying of hunger; they seek for bread to revive their spirits; but all in vain.[1] Look, O my God, upon my distress. My heart beats fast, and I writhe with pain, as I see how, for my foolish rebellion, the sword deals death in the streets, while pestilence and famine reign in the houses. Listen to my sighing; there is none to comfort me. All mine enemies have heard with delight of the calamity that thou hast brought upon me in chastisement for my sins. Look upon their wickedness, and let them fare as I have fared. Do to them as thou hast done to me; for my sighs are many and my heart is sore.

### 2. *The Prayer* (5)

The city's piteous lament over manifold sorrows (1-18)

Bethink thee, O our God, of all that is come upon us. Look and see how we are insulted. Our homes and the ancient land we love have passed to the hands of strangers and aliens. We are as children without a father—whose mother is husbandless. Water and wood we have to buy, as though we were in a strange land. The yoke of persecution is upon us; we are weary and never come to rest. We stretch out suppliant hands to Egypt and Babylon for

[1] So the Greek version, which ends v. 19 with the words, "and they found it not."

bread. We are bearing the sins of our fathers who are no more. Servants [1] are our lords, and from their tyranny there is no escape. We get our bread at the peril of our lives from the robber bands of the desert. Our skin glows like an oven with the fierce fever glow of famine. Matrons and maids were ravished in all the cities of Judah—in the holy city itself. Princes were hanged and elders dishonored. Young men were compelled to carry the mill, and youths stumbled under their heavy loads of wood. The elders ceased to gather at the gates,[2] and the youths gave over their music. Our heart was glad no more; the dance was turned into mourning. Our honor is in the dust. Woe! Woe! for we have sinned. Our heart is sick and our eyes are dark, because the holy hill of Zion lies waste, and jackals roam over it.

Prayer to the everlasting God for deliverance (19-22)

But thou, O our God, whose throne is eternal, and who art ever the same, why dost thou continually forget and forsake us? Bring us back, O our God, bring us back to thee, and make us again as in the days of old. Or hast thou rejected us utterly? is thine anger against us so very sore?

[1] Either the Babylonians in general, from the point of view of theocratic Israel, "the kingdom of priests" (Exod. 19 : 6); or perhaps insolent menials, who claimed authority over the vanquished people.

[2] To try cases, or more generally.

## IV

### LAMENT AND PRAYER (3)

The city's lament (1-21)

I am the man[1] of misery, whom God, in his anger, has smitten with his rod. The way that he has guided and led me was dark and murky. I am the one against whom he turns his hand evermore. He has withered and bruised me altogether—flesh and skin and bones. He has made me like a besieged city, and built round about me a wall of bitterness and weariness. He has constrained me to make my home in the darkness, like the dead that cannot rise again.[2] He has blocked my way as with a high hedge or a wall of hewn stone which I cannot pierce, so that my pathway is crooked and confused. He has made me like a prisoner bound with heavy chains of bronze, and his ears are deaf to my cry for help. Like a bear or as a lion he lurked for me in secret. He chased me aside and tore me in pieces and left me desolate. He has set me as a target for the arrow that he has launched from his bent bow, and the arrow has pierced my heart. The whole world mocks me in taunt-songs unceasingly, and bitterness is mine in abundance. He gave me stones for bread,[3] and

[1] To be taken collectively of the people (cf. vv. 40-47), as often in the Psalms (see pp. 25-30).

[2] Cf. Ps. 143 : 3.

[3] The literal meaning of this disputed passage in v. 16 appears to be: he broke my teeth on the gravel—a phrase of which various explanations

humbled me to the dust.[1] Peace and prosperity were mine no more; strength and hope were mine no more. I said, "My God is far away. O bethink thee of my bitter fate of misery and exile. Yes, I know thou wilt remember that my soul is bowed down within me."

The thought of the love of God inspires the city with submission and hope (22-36)

I will take this to heart and build my hope upon it—that the love of my God never ceases,[2] and his pity never fails. Every morning thy love is new, and tokens of thy faithfulness abundant. Jehovah is my portion [3]—I say to my heart—I will hope in him. To the soul that hopes in him and seeks him he is kind. It is a good thing, then, for one to wait in silence for his help, and to bear a yoke in youth. Let him sit and bear his burden in silence and alone, bowed to the dust yet cherishing his hope. Let him give his cheek to the smiter and bear the insult; for the affliction is but for a time, and in the greatness of his love the Lord follows the affliction with pity. For he does not love to give pain and sorrow: he has no pleasure in seeing prisoners crushed beneath the conqueror's [4] heel—no pleas-

are given, (i) he gave me stones instead of bread, or gritty bread, (ii) or, thrown to the ground, I gnawed the stones in my pain, (iii) or the reference may be to some punishment.

[1] Literally, covered me with ashes—to indicate either mourning or degradation.

[2] The language of 22b, and the parallel thought of v. 23, combine to suggest that the first person (*we* are not consumed) is improbable here. Much more probable is the simple emendation; the mercies of Jehovah cease not.

[3] Cf. Num. 18 : 20.

[4] The Babylonians.

ure in seeing justice perverted, or the cause of the innocent defeated at the trial.

Exhortation to repentance: prayer of confession (37-54)

Nothing can come to pass without the Lord's permission. He is the most high, the author of good and evil; but the evil is chastisement for sin, and wherefore should a man murmur thereat? Nay, rather, let us earnestly examine our ways, and return to Jehovah, the God in heaven, with hearts and hands uplifted, and confess our sin.

We have indeed sinned and been rebellious; and thou hast not forgiven. Thou hast wrapped thyself in the mantle of thine anger, and pursued us pitilessly to the death. Our prayers could not pierce the thick cloud which hid thee. Thou hast made the world look upon us with eyes of contempt and loathing. Our enemies, one and all, have opened their cruel mouths against us. Fear and death, ruin and destruction are ours.

Because of the ruin of the daughters[1] of Jerusalem, my sad eyes stream with tears, which shall not cease till Jehovah my God look down from heaven. I have been chased like a bird by my wanton enemies. They have cruelly thrust me, as it were, into the grave, and thrown stones upon me. The waters streamed over my head till I thought I was lost.

Prayer for vengeance (55-66)

But when I called on thee out of the depths, thou didst hearken, and come and speak peace to my fears. O lend

[1] Possibly, but not necessarily, the country towns in the neighborhood.

thine ear again when I cry to thee for help. Thou didst plead my cause, O Lord, and save my life. O my God, defend my cause again, for thou hast seen how I suffer from injustice. Thou hast seen how they have planned their vengeance and carried it out. Thou knowest the secret purposes of my foes, and thou hast heard how they continually insult me. See how they mock me all the day long in their taunt-songs. O my God, deal with them as they have dealt with me, and give them blindness of heart. Thy curse upon them! Pursue them in thine anger, and destroy them from off the face of the earth.

# APPENDIX

# APPENDIX

## I

### SUPERSCRIPTIONS OF THE PSALMS

Many of the terms that occur in the superscriptions of the Psalms are very obscure—they were already obscure to the Greek translators of the Psalter in the second century B. C.—and in determining their meaning we can seldom rise above conjecture. Some of those terms appear to denote the names of musical instruments, others again to indicate general musical or liturgical directions. As this is not the place for an elaborate discussion of the conflicting interpretations of those terms, we shall content ourselves with stating the interpretation which seems, on the whole, most probable.

*To the Chief Musician.* For the person in charge of the musical service of the temple. (Attached to fifty-five psalms.)

*On Neginoth* (Pss. 4, 6, etc.). On stringed instruments.

*On Nehiloth* (Ps. 5). On flutes? Or perhaps this was the first word of the tune to which the psalm was sung.

*On Sheminith* (Pss. 6, 12). On a cithern with eight strings; or perhaps it indicates the bass.

*Shiggaion* (Ps. 7). Wild music; dithyramb.

*On Gittith* (Ps. 8). On a musical instrument of Gath; or, in the musical style of Gath; or, song of the wine-press.

*On Muth-labben* (Ps. 9). After the tune, "The son has the strength of youth."

*Michtam* (Ps. 16). A golden song; or, one not hitherto published.

*On Aijeleth hash-Shahar* (Ps. 22). After the tune, "The hind of the dawn."

*Maschil* (Ps. 32). A didactic poem (but only a few of the psalms called by this name are really didactic); or, a pious meditation.

*Selah* (3 : 2). Always ends a section, and seems to indicate some kind of musical interlude.

*To bring to remembrance* (Pss. 38, 70), perhaps indicates that the psalm was to be sung when the meal offering (cf. Lev. 24 : 7) was presented.

*To Jeduthun* (Pss. 39, 62, 77). Probably not a person; but, "after Jeduthun"—some sort of musical style.

*Upon Shoshannim* (45) or *Shushan Eduth* (60). After the tune, "Lilies . . . . ."

*On Alamoth* (Ps. 46). Either, soprano; or, after the tune, "The son has the strength of youth" (cf. 9 : 1).

*Upon Mahalath* (53 : 1). Accompanied by dancing? Or after the tune, "Sickness of the heart." (?)

*Upon Mahalath Leannoth* (88). To sing praise? To sing to the accompaniment of the dance?

*Upon Jonath elem rehokim* (56). After the tune, "Dove of the distant terebinths."

*Al-tashheth* (57, 58, 59). After the tune, "Destroy it not" (cf. Isaiah 65 : 8).

*Higgaion* (9 : 16). Some kind of loud (?) playing. (The word occurs in the text of 92 : 3.)

*Song of Ascents or Degrees* (120 to 134). Pilgrim song.

## II

### THE ALPHABETIC PSALMS

The peculiar construction of these psalms is admirably illustrated by the following specimens which I owe to Binnie. (The Psalms, Their History, Teachings and Use, 1886, pp. 142-146.)

In Pss. 111 and 112 each new line, that is, half verse, begins with a succeeding letter of the alphabet. For example:

1. Adore will I the Lord with all my heart :
   Both in the meeting of the upright and in the congregation.
2. Confessedly great are the deeds of the Lord :
   Delighters in them search them out (Ps. 111 : 1, 2).

. . . . . .

9. Richly hath he scattered : he hath given to the poor :
   Stand shall his righteousness forever.
   Tower aloft shall his horn with honor.
10. Vexed shall the wicked be when he seeth it :
    With his teeth shall he gnash and melt away :
    Yéa, the desire of the wicked man shall perish (112 : 9, 10).

In the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, each of the eight verses constituting a stanza begins with the same letter. Thus:

9. By what means shall a young man cleanse his path?
   By taking heed thereto, according to thy word.
10. Bending my whole heart, I have sought thee:
   O let me not err from thy commandments.
11. Beneath the covert of my heart have I hid thy saying,
   That I might not sin against thee.
12. Blessed art thou, O Lord,
   Teach me thy statutes.
13. By my lips have I declared,
   All the judgments of thy mouth.
14. Blessedness I find in the way of thy testimonies,
   As much as in all riches.
15. By myself will I meditate in thy precepts:
   And I will have respect to thy paths.
16. Blessed will I count myself in thy statutes:
   I will not forget thy word (119 : 9-16).

## III

## BOOKS OF REFERENCE

Any exhaustive list of works upon the Psalter would have to include many books in many languages. The following list is practically confined to the more important English books; the few foreign books which are mentioned are either peculiarly useful and recent or of great historical importance.

### Commentaries.

Of commentaries on the Psalter, Augustine's elaborate "Enarrationes in Psalmos" (translated and edited by A. C.

Coxe, Scribner's) is an excellent specimen of the ancient and now obsolescent method of allegorical exegesis, curious rather than edifying from the standpoint of modern historical criticism. The commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 A. D.) (whose principal results are most accessible in an essay by Baethgen in the "Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft" for 1886) is astonishingly modern in spirit and method, and displays great insight into the problem of date, finding situations for many "Davidic" psalms in exilic, post-exilic, and even Maccabean times. A curious and interesting collection of specimens of patristic and mediæval interpretation will be found in Neale and Littledale's four volumes (1860-1874). Luther devoted much of his strength to the interpretation of the Psalms; for the English reader a good specimen of his work will be seen in his "Commentary on the Psalms called Psalms of Degrees" (London, Simpkin and Marshall, 1819). The great commentary of Calvin (1557), easily accessible in English translation (Edinburgh, Calvin Translation Society, 1847, 5 vols.), abounds in fruitful hints; and considering the age, his instinct for historical interpretation is very remarkable.

Coming to more recent times, the commentary of Ewald (2 vols., Williams & Norgate, 1881) will usually be found illuminating; it is marked by a fine and subtle sympathy for the spiritual condition and experiences of the psalmists. The work of Delitzsch (3 vols., T. & T. Clark, 1895) is very learned and elaborate, valuable for its Talmudical allusions, but perhaps too much inclined to find the mature ideas of

Christianity in the simpler language of the Psalter. The work of Perowne (in 3 vols., 4th edition, London, G. Bell & Sons, 1886) is often very valuable, resting on adequate scholarship, true to the historical method, and of much homiletic suggestiveness. A useful and sympathetic study is to be found in "The Psalms chronologically arranged; an amended version with historical introductions and explanatory notes by Four Friends" (Macmillan & Co., 1867, 2d edition, 1870). The commentary of Jennings and Lowe ("The Psalms, with Introductions and Critical Notes," 2 vols., Macmillan & Co., 1885), somewhat conservative in tone, is an admirable work; it devotes considerable attention to the language, as well as to the sentiment and situation of the psalms, and is not as well known as it deserves to be. In the Polychrome Bible (Dodd, Mead & Co.) the volume on the Psalms by Wellhausen (translated by Furness) has some brief but interesting notes and illustrations. Cheyne's "Book of Psalms" (London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1888) shows great learning and sympathy with the inner thought of the Psalmists, and is a perfect storehouse of apt illustrative quotations from the whole field of literature. Kirkpatrick's commentary (published in 3 vols., now procurable in one, Cambridge Bible series, 1901) is very adequate, putting all reasonable possibilities of interpretation before the reader; it is written in a fine religious spirit, and marked by great, almost excessive caution. The 2 vols. of E. G. King (Cambridge, Deighton, Bell & Co., 1898, 1902), carrying the Psalter down to the eighty-ninth psalm, occupy a place by themselves. Abounding in cautious

and suggestive attempts to find the historical occasions of the psalms, the work yet displays a very decided tendency to a mystic interpretation, which is sometimes hardly justified by historical exegesis; but it is a strong and original book, and valuable for its quotations from Latin hymns. Baethgen's commentary (in Nowack's "Handkommentar" series) presents a fine combination of the religious and scientific spirit. Duhm's commentary (in the "Kurzer Handcommentar" series) is very original and stimulating, though it appears to take too many liberties in the transposition of the text, upon which, however, there are many penetrating suggestions.

For the English reader whose opportunities of study are limited, the commentaries of Cheyne and Kirkpatrick will perhaps be sufficient—each in a measure supplementing the other.

Interesting articles on occasional psalms will be found scattered throughout the theological magazines, for example, the *Expositor* and the *Expository Times*. A useful series of studies on particular psalms, by Gunkel, appeared in the Biblical World for 1903. There is a fine exposition of Pss. 120-134 by Cox in "The Pilgrim Psalms" (New York, Randolph & Co.).

### Translations.

Original translations are occasionally offered by the authors of commentaries on the Psalms; for example, by Ewald, Delitzsch, Perowne, King, Cheyne and Wellhausen—the last two being particularly worthy of study. Besides these must be mentioned Driver's "Parallel Psalter" (Oxford, Clarendon

Press, 1898), which presents side by side the Prayer Book version of the Psalter with a translation by Professor Driver himself, conforming to that version as closely as possible. John de Witt's translation (A. D. F. Randolph & Co., New York, 1891) is also fine. The verse translations of the Psalter have not been and perhaps cannot hope to be very successful. Probably the beautiful translation of Keble, who was both a scholar and a poet, is as great as a verse translation is ever likely to be.

### Introductions.

Besides the introductions prefixed to most commentaries on the Psalter, special attention may be called to the following: W. R. Smith's "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," Lecture VII. (2d revised and enlarged edition, 1892, D. Appleton & Co.), and his article on the Psalms in the "Encyclopædia Britannica;" also, the articles on the Psalms in the "Dictionary of the Bible," edited by Hastings (4 vols., Scribner's), and the "Encyclopædia Biblica" (Macmillan & Co., 4 vols.); also Driver's "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament" (ninth edition, 1901, Scribner's), and Kautzsch's "The Literature of the Old Testament" (translated by Dr. Taylor; published by Williams & Norgate, 1898, and by Putnams, 1899). A very fresh and original discussion will be found in Peters' "The Old Testament and the New Scholarship," chapter 8 (London, Methuen, 1901). Davison's "Praises of Israel" (London, Charles H. Kelly, 1898) is an excellent and interesting introduction to the study of the Psalter.

# *Appendix*

## Special Problems of the Psalter.

The most elaborate examination of the date and origin of the Psalter is to be found in Cheyne's "Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter" (London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1891), pp. 1-254. The argument of this book is answered by James Robertson in his "Poetry and Religion of the Psalms" (William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh and London, 1898), who maintains that the Psalter must contain more or less pre-exilic poetry. Sellin, in a Latin essay entitled "Disputatio de Origine Carminum, quae primus psalterii liber continet" (1892), contends that the first book is, in the main, pre-exilic. The question is fully discussed by Ehrt, "Abfassungszeit und Abschluss des Psalters." There is a learned discussion of the "Authorship and Titles of the Psalms according to early Jewish Authorities," by A. Neubauer in vol. ii, pp. 1-57 of Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica (Oxford, Clarendon Press). The Davidic authorship of many psalms is maintained by Binnie, "The Psalms, their History, Teaching and Use" (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1886), MacLaren, "The Life of David as represented in his Psalms" (Hodder & Stoughton, 1894), Sharpe, "The Student's Handbook to the Psalms," pp. 134-263 (London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1896), Wright, "The Psalms of David and the Higher Criticism", (Edinburgh, Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1900). The high probability of Davidic authorship is maintained by Kirkpatrick in the introduction to his commentary (ch. iv), and by Robertson in his "Poetry and Religion of the Psalms"

already referred to (ch. xiii). For the presentation of the arguments on the other side, see Cheyne's "Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism," chs. ii and iii (New York, Thomas Whittaker, 1892).

The discussion of the question of the "I" of the Psalter—whether it is individual or collective—was practically started in its modern form by Smend's essay "Ueber das Ich der Psalmen" in the "Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft," 1888, pp. 49-147. Besides the books which deal exclusively with this subject, for example, by Baer, "Individual- und Gemeindepsalmen" (1894), who examines every psalm, and by Engert, "Der betende Gerechte der Psalmen" (1902), who believes that the "I" is always collective, the question is often touched in books on the Psalter; for example, by Cheyne and Robertson in the volumes already mentioned. Robertson argues well for the probability of individual psalms, as does Sellin, in the essay already referred to. A brief discussion of the question will be found in Davison's "Praises of Israel," ch. vii.

### The Theology of the Psalter.

Cheyne, "Origin of the Psalter," Lectures VI, VII, and VIII may be consulted with much profit. Davison has several clear and useful chapters in his "Praises of Israel." A brief essay will be found in chapter iii of Perowne's commentary. More elaborate and often highly suggestive is the section (Book 2) in Binnie's "Psalms," though much of what he says is written from a somewhat unhistorical standpoint. Jen-

nings and Lowe have some pertinent remarks in chapter iv of vol. i, on the "Relation of the Psalms to the New Testament." Kirkpatrick's commentary, vol. i, ch. ix, of the Introduction will also be found useful. Several of the books just mentioned discuss the imprecatory psalms: on this subject, compare also Sharpe's "Student's Handbook," pp. 373-380.

Much fantastic writing has gathered round the Messianic element in the Psalter. The line of argument, for example, in Bishop Alexander's Bampton Lectures for 1876 on "The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity" (London, Murray, 1877), would, speaking generally, carry little conviction to a student trained to the historical method. The question is also discussed from the older standpoint by Sharpe (337 ff.). So the "Studies in the Book of Psalms," by Forbes (T. & T. Clark, 1888), who believes that the order of the Psalms contains a divine mystery, are marked by a pathetic ingenuity. A sane discussion will be found in Kirkpatrick, vol. i, ch. viii, of the Introduction.

### The Use of the Psalms in the Christian Church.

Cheyne deals directly with this subject in his "Christian Use of the Psalms" (London, Isbister, 1899), which discusses certain psalms in detail and raises the question whether, from the standpoint of historical exegesis, these psalms may still be fairly sung by the Christian Church. Other less elaborate discussions will be found in Perowne's "Psalms," vol. i, ch. ii, Alexander's Bampton Lectures (Lecture 8), Binnie's Psalms, pp. 367-403, Davison's "Praises of Israel," ch. x.

# *Appendix*

## Book of Lamentations.

The literature on *The Book of Lamentations* is not very extensive. Of commentaries may be mentioned that of Ewald, who includes the poems of this book among the Psalms of the Exile ("Commentary on the Psalms," vol. ii, pp. 99-124, Williams & Norgate, 1881); Cheyne, in the Pulpit Commentary on "Jeremiah and Lamentations" (London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co.); Streane, on "Jeremiah and Lamentations," in the Cambridge Bible series (1892); and Löhr in Nowack's Handkommentar series (1893). For Introduction, the student should consult W. R. Smith's article in the Encyclopædia Britannica; the articles in the "Dictionary of the Bible," and the "Encyclopædia Biblica," and Driver's chapter in his "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament." Adeney's volume ("The Canticles and Lamentations") in the "Expositor's Bible" series (London, Hodder & Stoughton) is also good. For a brief statement of some of the questions involved, see Cheyne's "Jeremiah: His Life and Times," in the "Men of the Bible" series (London, James Nisbet & Co.), pp. 177-181.

## Hebrew Poetry.

The modern phase of the discussion of Hebrew poetry may be said to have been inaugurated by Herder's "Der Geist der hebräischen Poesie," one of the epoch-making books of literary history and Biblical interpretation. In England, the habit of regarding the Bible as literature was started by Bishop

Lowth's illuminating and fruitful "Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews." Jebb's "Sacred Literature" is written in the same spirit as Lowth, but with little of his power. Of more recent books, Isaac Taylor's "Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry" (London, Bell & Daldy, 1861) is worthy of special mention; it is a noble book, full of insight. Moulton's volume on "The Literary Study of the Bible" (Boston, Heath & Co.; London, Isbister, Rev. edit., 1899) has done much to impress upon the educated world a sense of the literary form of the Hebrew Scriptures. Robertson's "Poetry and Religion of the Psalms," ch. vii, has some fine remarks on Hebrew poetry. The subject receives very competent treatment in the articles on Poetry in Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible," and the "Encyclopædia Biblica," and in Driver's discussion at the beginning of his chapter on the Psalms in his "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament." The most elaborate discussion of the Biblical material on its literary side is König's "Stilistik, Rhetorik, Poetik in Bezug auf die biblische Litteratur" (1900), and the most interesting and popular attempt to illustrate the nature and contents of Hebrew poetry is Kautzsch's "Die Poesie und die poetischen Bücher des Alten Testaments" (1902).

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